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NARRATIVE

OF

A YEAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH

CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARABIA

(1862–63)

BY

WILLIAM GIFFORD PALGRAVE

LATE OF THE EIGHTH REGIMENT BOMBAY N. I.

Not in vain the nation-strivings, nor by chance the currents flow;
Error-mazed, yet truth-directed, to their certain goal they go
TEY'YEEYAT EL KOBRA', BY EBN-EL-FÁRID

فلا عَبَثًا وَا لُخلْقُ لَمْ يُخْلَقوا سُدىً ـ وَإِنْ لَمْ تكُنْ افْعَالُهُمْ بالسَدِيدَة

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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THIRD EDITION

London and Cambridge
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1866

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

CARSTEN NIEBUHR

IN HONOUR OF THAT

INTELLIGENCE AND COURAGE

WHICH FIRST OPENED ARABIA TO EUROPE

I respectfully Dedicate

THE RESULTS OF A JOURNEY

ITSELF INSPIRED BY THAT GREAT MEMORY

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PREFACE

A JOURNEY undertaken through Central and Eastern Arabia, with the purpose of observing rather than of publishing, put me in possession of certain details upon those parts of the great Peninsula, which may be worth recording. It is true that the circumstances of my visit, and the restraints inseparable from native disguise, abridged antiquarian research, impeded botanical or geological enquiry, and deprived me of the means for exact and scientific investigation; for instance, of the customary requisites for verifying longitudes and latitudes, or determining the degrees of heat and cold, of moisture and aridity. Worse yet! I was at times unable to take down a single note, much less could I display a sketching book or photographic apparatus, however fair the landscape and tempting the sun; and hence my pen must unaided do the work of the pencil as well as its own, while my reader's imagination may help to supply the rest. Why this was so, a few pages of the narrative will make clear. On the other hand long years, the best part of my life indeed, passed in the East, familiarity with the Arabic language till it became to me almost a mother tongue, and experience in the ways and manners of "Semitic" nations, to give them their general or symbolic name, supplied me with advantages counterbalancing in some degree the drawbacks

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enumerated above. Besides, the men of the land, rather than the land of the men, were my main object of research and principal study. My attention was directed to the moral, intellectual, and political conditions of living Arabia, rather than to the physical phenomena of the country,—of great indeed, but, to me, of inferior interest. Meanwhile whatever observations on antiquity and science, on plants and stones, geography and meteorology I was able to make, I shall give, regretting only their inevitable imperfection.

In the hard attempt to render Arab orthography by English letters, I have for the most part followed the system adopted by Lane in his delightful "Modern Egyptians," as the nearest approximation intelligible to English readers. However, in representing the initial "Jeem" by "Dj" rather than by "j" (as in the middle or at the end of a word), I have quitted our countryman for the universal foreign method; nor have I generally thought it necessary to accent vowels, contenting myself with an occasional mark (¯) of length, where uniformity of pronunciation appeared to require it. Some mistakes, or at least irregularities, will, I fear, have eluded the vigilance of correctors and revisers in a first edition; a second will, I trust, remove such anomalies. The few maps annexed, though without pretension to that exact nicety which sextants and measuring-lines can alone afford, may serve in some measure to illustrate the leading features and divisions of the principal provinces, towns, and country in general.

Readers may perhaps be desirous to learn what was

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the special object and what the determining circumstances of the journey now before them. The hope of doing something towards the permanent social good of these wide regions; the desire of bringing the stagnant waters of Eastern life into contact with the quickening stream of European progress; perhaps a natural curiosity to know the yet unknown, and the restlessness of enterprise not rare in Englishmen; these were the principal motives. The author may add that at the time of the undertaking he was in connection with the Order of the Jesuits, an Order well known in the annals of philanthropic daring; he has also gratefully to acknowledge that the necessary funds were furnished by the liberality of the present Emperor of the French.

It is a matter of real importance to form a correct idea of nations with whom events tend to bring us ever more and more into contact, and of whose future destinies we seem likely to be in no small measure, under Providence, the arbitrators. Ideas which, I regret to say, appear to me often distorted and exaggerated, prevail in the West regarding our Eastern fellow-men; ideas due in part to the defective observation, perhaps the prejudices, of travellers, too preoccupied by their own thoughts and fancies to appreciate or even understand the phases of mind and manners among nations other than their own; while at times an enthusiastic imagination has thrown a prismatic colouring over the faded East. My principal object and endeavour in this work has been, accordingly, to give a tolerably correct notion of the Arab race,—of their condition, intellectual and political, social

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and religious; such at least as it appeared to me; and should it be my good fortune to have effected this, I ask no more. Much herein will not only serve for the nations and tribes that inhabit the Arabian Peninsula, but may also afford useful hints for understanding other Oriental lands and peoples; for Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, nay even for Anatolia, Curdistan, and Persia, all which have been deeply modified in many respects by Arab influence, partly too by Arab intermixture and colonization. Thus a clear apprehension of the causes of prosperity and decline in Arabia and within its independent limits, may give no small aid towards solving many a riddle in the phases of the adjacent Ottoman Empire, and even of other Asiatic Governments, each in its proportion and degree. Besides, the practical working and the results of that strange phenomenon of the human mind, Mahometanism, or, more compendiously and more correctly, Islam, will hereby receive especial illustration; a point which I would especially desire to commend to the notice of those in East or West who are inclined to bestow their credence or admiration on the Prophet and his work.

With regard to the correctness of facts or statements bearing on the present or past of Arabia, given in this work, it may be well to remark that I have all along carefully discriminated between what I have myself seen in person or ascertained by actual investigation, what I have merely inferred or conjectured, and what I have gathered at secondhand from the natives of the country. Dividing thus the subject-matter into three classes, I claim

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for the first that degree of certainty and reliance which can be placed on an Englishman saying "I have seen," or "I have heard," and no more. The second I must leave to my reader's own free criticism, trusting that years of Oriental study, observation, and intercourse may incline the verdict, where doubtful, in my favour; nor do I wish to impose my theories and conclusions on those who may have their reasons for thinking them erroneous. The third, or hearsay statements have each invariably their preface to announce them for what they are; and to them my reader may give what degree of value he thinks fit. The only point on which I lay any stress, when quoting authorities of this nature, is whether they were natives of, or at least neighbours to, the country they described, and eye-witnesses of the facts they averred, or otherwise. But it hardly seemed requisite to set down, as a general rule, their individual names and surnames, or to fill my pages with the catalogue of Mohammed, Ḥasan, and 'Alee—an enumeration which in England could afford no more guarantee for veracity than Thomas, John, or William, in Arabia.

Nor have I deemed it needful, in a work of this character, to state beneath every page the names of Eastern authors cited or alluded to. Should, however, any Oriental scholar desire to know who they are, I may mention as the principal among the works which opportunity and leisure have best enabled me to consult,—the Ḥamāsah of Aboo-Temmām, the well-known Mo'allakāt of 'Amroo-l-Ḳe'ys and his fellow-poets, the writings of Aboo-l-Feda, Maḳreezee, the Dimishḳee Shems-ed-Deen,

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Ebn-Khallikān, Ebn-Khaldoon, Ḥareeree, Maḳarree, the proverbs of Meydānee, the famous Alf-Leyl-w-Leylah, or Thousand-and-One Nights (a book in which often "more is meant than meets the ear"); the stories of 'Antarah, Aboo-Zeyd, Benoo-Hilāl, and the gallant Zeer; the poems or "divans" of 'Omr'-ebn-Abee-Rabee'ah, of Djereer, Akhṭal, Ferazdaḳ, El-Moghrebee, Motenebbi, Ebn-Fāriḍ, Aḅoo-l-'Ola, the Nabloosee, the Divan of Hodheyl; besides the Coranic commentaries of Beyḍawee, Zamakhsharee, Djelal-ed-Deen, and others, with the ascetical writings of El-Ghazalee, the Kibreet-el-Aḥmar, the Anwār-el-Ḳadeeseeyah, the treatises of Moḥee-d-Deen, and others of whom only scraps and fragments have remained to us; lastly, several anonymous manuscript collections of historical and moral incident, put into my hands by native acquaintances in Syria and Egypt, and mostly destroyed or pilfered by my friends the Druses when in 1860 they burnt Zaḥleh, and therein my residence. To the above-mentioned sources, accordingly, I refer my learned readers for the investigation and verification of allusions, facts, or theories collected from their pages.

Of European works regarding the lands of the East, of travels in Arabia and its vicinity, I have read but little, from want not of will, but of leisure. Niebuhr's cool and impartial style led me to study his Arabian journey with special attention, and I have had every reason to admire the great truthfulness and the judicious observation of that eminent traveller. In some few points, indeed, he appears to me slightly mistaken or misinformed, and such I have noticed in the course of my work, with all due

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respect for the authority of the learned German, and leaving my readers to judge for themselves between the conflicting statements thus brought forward.

Subsequent to my return home, Capt. Welsted's and Mr. Wallin's Memoirs, as given among the Papers of the Royal Geographical Society, have been kindly put at my disposal. So far as my experience goes, it confirms their accuracy. The researches of these gentlemen having been mainly topographical, they naturally paid but a subordinate attention to the circumstances of the inhabitants, and this blank in their narratives is precisely what I now desire to fill up.

With the travels of Pococke, Burckhardt, and others, I have not sufficient acquaintance for much positive confirmation or dissidence. It seems to me that in Burckhardt's work there is somewhat of an exaggerated view, not unfrequent in other authors, regarding Bedouins and Bedouin life; perhaps, too, a want of clearness and accuracy in the social picture, even in the statistical enumerations. Few writers, indeed, appear to me to have arrived at a just appreciation of the wandering, fewer still of the settled, population of Arabia; few to have well understood the workings of the clan-system in either element of society, and where lies the strength, where the weakness of the land. For this the collective estimate is often too vague, and the isolated details partial and insufficient. Yet, considering the difficulties in their way, we should be more ready to praise European investigators for what they have done, than to criticize them for omissions.

If, however, from the pages of a past generation I have

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derived comparatively little assistance, I have not been without the kind help of those living friends whose erudition and Oriental acquirements rendered them best able to suggest, amend, and supply. Professor Rödiguer at Berlin, and Mr. Stanley Poole in London, have both laid me in this way under real and lasting obligations; and their names I mention with pleasure, not to exclude other friends, but as the abridgment of a long list at the head of which they stand. In the minute and laborious details of the general map of Arabia prefixed to this volume, Professor Kiepert of Berlin lent his learned and conscientious accuracy; the Geographical Societies of London and Berlin, with their respective Presidents, Sir Roderick Murchison and Professor Barth, have alike honoured me with friendly support. In short, nothing which kindness could do in my behalf has been left undone in the capitals of England and of Northern Germany, and hence I have the less excuse to offer for what defects may exist in the work now laid before the judgment of the reader, although my best has truly been done to render them few.—But I hope he is now willing, or even wishful, to start with me on our way. And thus without further preface, let us mount and go.

WILLIAM GIFFORD PALGRAVE

BERLIN: April 20, 1865

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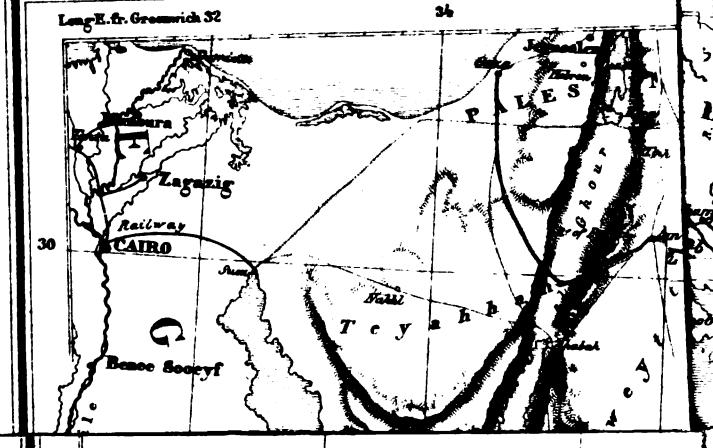

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JOURNEY AND RESIDENCE

IN

CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARABIA

CHAPTER I

THE DESERT AND ITS INHABITANTS

But I hold the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.—*A. Tennyson*

DEPARTURE FROM MA'ĀN—OUR BEDOUIN COMPANIONS—OUR OWN EQUIPMENT AND DISGUISE; ITS REASON AND CHARACTER—INCIDENT WHILE AT MA'ĀN—BEDOUIN SUN-WORSHIP—REMARKS ON BEDOUIN RELIGION AND MORALITY—WELLS OF WOḲBA—FIVE DAYS OF STONY DESERT—MODE OF TRAVELLING—FIRST NEWS OF ṬELĀL-EBN-RASHEED—WELLS—APPROACH TO WADI SERḤĀN—HILLS—SEMOOM—VIEW OF THE DESERT—ITS CHANGE AT WADI SERḤĀN—SHERARAT ENCAMPMENT—BEDOUIN HOSPITALITY AND CONVERSATION—THEIR SOCIAL CONDITION—SAMIḤ AND MEṢAA'—EFFECT OF ṬELĀL'S GOVERNMENT ON THE BEDOUINS—ANECDOTE—THEIR WARS—GENERAL VIEW OF THE FIRST FORMATION OF ARAB NATIONALITY, AND ITS DIVISION INTO THE FIXED AND THE NOMADE POPULATIONS; THEIR RESPECTIVE VALUE—ROUTE OF WADI SERḤAN: SAND-HILLS AND GHAḌA—REMARKS ON THE CAMEL—'AZZĀM SHERARAT OF MA'GOOA'—CHANGE OF GUIDES—ROUTE TO DJOWF: OSTRICHES, SCORPIONS—DJEBAL-EL-DJOWF: VILLAGE OF DJOON—FIRST MEETING WITH THE MEN OF DJOWF—GORGES OF THE VALLEY.

"ONCE for all let us attempt to acquire a fairly correct and comprehensive knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula. With its coasts we are already in great measure acquainted; several of its maritime provinces have been, if not thoroughly, at least sufficiently, explored; Yemen and Ḥejāz, Mecca and Medinah, are no longer mysteries to us, nor are we wholly

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without information on the districts of Ḥaḍramaut and 'Omān. But of the interior of the vast region, of its plains and mountains, its tribes and cities, of its governments and institutions, of its inhabitants, their ways and customs, of their social condition, how far advanced in civilization or sunk in barbarism, what do we as yet really know, save from accounts necessarily wanting in fulness and precision? It is time to fill up this blank in the map of Asia, and this, at whatever risks, we will now endeavour; either the land before us shall be our tomb, or we will traverse it in its fullest breadth, and know what it contains from shore to shore. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*"

Such were my thoughts, and such, more or less, I should suppose, those of my companion, when we found ourselves at fall of night without the eastern gate of Ma'ān, while the Arabs, our guides and fellow-travellers, filled their water-skins from a gushing source hard by the town walls, and adjusted the saddles and the burdens of their camels, in preparation for the long journey that lay before us and them. It was the evening of the 16th June 1862; the largest stars were already visible in the deep blue depths of a cloudless sky, while the crescent moon, high to the west, shone as she shines in those heavens, and promised us assistance for some hours of our night march. We were soon mounted on our meagre long-necked beasts, "as if," according to the expression of an Arab poet, "we and our men were at mast-heads," and now we set our faces to the east. Behind us lay, in a mass of dark outline, the walls and castle of Ma'ān, its houses and gardens, and farther back in the distance the high and barren range of the Sheraa' mountains, merging into the coast-chain of Ḥejāz. Before and around us extended a wide and level plain, blackened over with countless pebbles of basalt and flint, except where the moonbeams gleamed white on little intervening patches of clear sand, or on yellowish streaks of withered grass, the scanty product of the winter rains, and now dried into hay. Over all a deep silence, which even our Arab companions seemed fearful of breaking; when they spoke it was in a half whisper and in few words, while the noiseless tread of our camels sped stealthily but rapidly through the gloom, without disturbing its stillness.

Some precaution was not indeed wholly out of place, for

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that stage of the journey on which we were now entering was anything but safe. We were bound for the Djowf, the nearest inhabited district of Central Arabia, its outlying station, in fact. Now the intervening tract offered for the most part the double danger of robbers and of thirst, of marauding bands and of the summer season. The distance itself to be traversed was near two hundred miles in a straight line, and unavoidable circumstances were likely to render it much longer. For the wells, the landmarks of the traveller, and according to which he needs must shape his course, are not ordinarily arranged in lines of mathematical straightness; and, besides, the necessity of avoiding districts frequented by hostile or suspected tribes often obliges the Bedouin to adopt some unaccustomed and circuitous route.

Nor was the society itself that we were actually in of a nature much to reassure the mind, especially at the outset of such a journey. On my own comrade, indeed—a native of the village of Zaḥleh, in the plains of Cœlo-Syria—I could fully rely. Hardy, young, and enterprising, he belonged to a locality whose inhabitants are accustomed to danger, while the contempt with which they look down on the neighbouring populations renders them habitually less susceptible than most of their countrymen to the ordinary impressions of fear in a strange land. But our Bedouin companions were a strange set: they were three in number; their leader, Salim-el-'Aṭneh, belonged to the Howeytat Arabs, a numerous and energetic tribe inhabiting the mountain district from Kerak on the Dead Sea shore to Ma'ān. Our friend himself was a member of a powerful family among them, and near akin to the chiefs of the clan; but he had rendered himself so unfortunately conspicuous by repeated acts of robbery and pillage, with a supplementary murder now and then, that his position was at present hardly better than that of an outlaw. Lean in make and swarthy of features, his thin compressed lips implied settled resolution and daring purpose, while the calmness of his grey eye showed a cool and thoughtful disposition, not without some possible intimation of treachery.

I may here remark, that the favourable picture occasionally drawn by travellers of the inviolability of Bedouin good faith is not always in that exact accordance with real facts which one could

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desire. On the contrary, deeds of the most cold-blooded perfidy are by no means uncommon among these nomades; and strangers under their guidance and protection, nay, even their own kindred brethren of the desert, are but too often the victims of such conduct. To lead travellers astray in the wilderness till they fall exhausted by thirst and weariness, and then to plunder and leave them to die, is no unfrequent Bedouin procedure; and the instances on record are too many to be considered as mere chance exceptions from a better rule. Thus, for example, a numerous caravan, composed principally of wealthy Jews, on their way across the desert from Damascus to Bagdad, was, not many years since, betrayed by its Bedouin guides; and the travellers perished to a man, while their faithless conductors, after keeping aloof till they were sure that thirst and the burning sun had done their work, returned to the scene of death and constituted themselves the sole and universal legatees of the moveable goods, gear, and wealth of their too confiding companions. I myself, during my stay at the town of Ḥā'yel, in Central Arabia, met with a large Hebrew folio, once the property of one of these unfortunate Israelites. The Bedouin to whose lot it had fallen, amid his share of the plunder, had brought it thus far, in hope of rendering his treason so far profitable by the sale of a work all the more valuable in Eastern opinion for being totally unintelligible.

However, as to Salim, whatever drawbacks might exist in his outward appearance, or in his too well known personal history, his good sense and manly character afforded some ground of confidence in his present fidelity; a brave and foresighted man, however unprincipled, may always be trusted to a certain extent. But I can hardly say so much for his two companions, 'Alee and Djordee, Sherarat Bedouins, and utter barbarians in appearance no less than in character, wild, fickle, reckless, and the capacity of whose intellect was as scanty as its cultivation. Indeed, Salim himself more than once advised us to avoid all familiarity with them, lest it should diminish the involuntary awe of the savage for civilized man.

A long and very dirty shirt, reaching nearly to the ankles, a black cotton handkerchief over the head, fastened on by a twist of camel's hair, a tattered cloak, striped white and brown, a

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leather girdle, much the worse for wear, from which dangled a rusty knife, a long-barrelled and cumbrous matchlock, a yet longer sharp-pointed spear, a powder-belt, broken and coarsely patched up with thread—such was the accoutrement of these worthies, and such, indeed, is the ordinary Bedouin guise on a journey. Salim's own rigging out was of the same description, only the respective items were of a somewhat better quality.

Myself and my companion were dressed like ordinary middle-class travellers of inner Syria; an equipment in which we had already made our way from Gaza on the sea-coast to Ma'ān without much remark or unseasonable questioning from those whom we fell in with, while we traversed a country so often described already by Pococke, Laborde, and downwards, under the somewhat pedantic name of Arabia Petræa, that it would be superfluous for me to enter into any new account of it in the present work. Our dress then consisted partly of a long stout blouse of Egyptian hemp, and under it, unlike our Bedouin fellow-travellers, we indulged in the luxury of the loose cotton drawers common in the East, while our coloured head-kerchiefs, though simple enough, were girt by 'aḳḳals or head-bands of some pretension to elegance; the loose red leather boots of the country completed our toilet.

But in the large travelling-sacks at our camels' sides were contained suits of a more elegant appearance, carefully concealed from Bedouin gaze, but destined for appearance when we should reach better inhabited and more civilized districts. This reserve toilet numbered articles like the following: coloured over-dresses, the Syrian combaz, handkerchiefs where silk stripes relieved the plebeian cotton, and girdles of good material and tasteful colouring; such clothes being absolutely requisite to maintain our assumed character. Mine was that of a native travelling doctor, a quack if you will; and accordingly a tolerable dress was indispensable for the credit of my medical practice. My comrade, who by a slight but necessary fiction passed for my brother-in-law, appeared sometimes as a retail merchant, such as not unfrequently visit these countries, and sometimes as my pupil or associate in my assumed profession.

Our pharmacopœia consisted of a few but well selected and efficacious drugs, inclosed in small tight-fitting tin boxes, stowed

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away for the present in the ample recesses of our travelling bags; about fifty of these little cases contained wherewithal to kill or cure half the sick men of Arabia. Medicines of a liquid form had been as much as possible omitted, not only from the difficulty of ensuring them a safe transport amid so rough a mode of journeying, but also on account of the rapid evaporation unavoidable in this dry and burning climate. In fact two or three small bottles, whose contents had seemed to me of absolute necessity, soon retained nothing save their labels to indicate what they had held, in spite of air-tight stoppers and double coverings. I record this, because the hint may be useful to any one who should be inclined to embark in similar guise on the same adventures.

Some other objects requisite in medical practice, two or three European books for my own private use, and kept carefully secret from Arab curiosity, with a couple of Esculapian treatises in good Arabic, intended for professional ostentation, completed this part of our fitting-out. But besides these, an ample provision of cloth, handkerchiefs, glass necklaces, pipe-bowls, and the like, for sale in whatever localities might not offer sufficient facility for the healing art, filled up our saddle-bags well nigh to bursting. Last, but not least, two large sacks of coffee, the sheet-anchor and main hope of our commerce, formed alone a sufficient load for a vigorous camel.

Perhaps my reader may wonder at so complicated an apparatus of disguise, and even condemn it as at any rate superfluous. But for those who desire to travel with anything like security in Central Arabia, all these, or at least equivalent measures, are, if not absolutely necessary, at least extremely advantageous; the why and wherefore I shall leave to the course of my narrative to explain. In the mean time my friendly readers may take it on my word that had it not been for all this they would never have had the satisfaction, whatever that may be, of making their journey across the great Peninsula book in hand and by their snug fireside, with somewhat less risk and discomfort than the travellers themselves had in their time to undergo.

Could we, however, when first starting, have foreknown the real nature of the countries before us, we might have very well dispensed with a good part of our mercantile provisions, designed mainly for Bedouin purchasers, and augmented on the other

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hand our medical supplies, more adapted to townsmen and villagers. But supposing, like most people, that Arabia was almost exclusively the territory of nomades, and that the fixed population must be proportionally small and unimportant, we deemed the former class of articles at least as available as the latter; a grievous mistake, and of which we soon became aware. For after once traversing this first stage of our journey, the rest of our way across the inner provinces, and up to the very shores of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, lay, with very little exception, through countries where Bedouins stand for little or nothing, whereas, on the contrary, the settled inhabitants of the soil, with their towns, tillage, and governments, are everything. But all this we had yet to learn.

Already, indeed, our semi-mercantile appearance had caused us serious inconveniences, while our medical character had on the contrary preserved us from a total defeat. The occasion was as follows:—

Ma'ān, from which we had just parted, is a small town, or rather village, situated on either side of the great pilgrim road from Damascus to Mecca, at about thirteen days' march distant from the former, and full twice as much from the latter. The locality itself has been sufficiently described by Mr. Wallin in his North-Arabian journey. Now as we happened to arrive there, on our way from Wadi 'Aḳabah, just in the midmost of the pilgrim season, we found the town occupied by a small Turkish garrison, stationed there during the months of the Ḥajj for the better protection of the route, while the whole population was in an unusual state of alertness; all untoward circumstances for us, who wished to slip through as quietly and unnoticed as possible. While we here awaited for ten weary days the appearance of guides capable of serving our turn in our onward journey, the magistrates of the place, together with the Turkish Effendis and garrison, fell to observing us rather too closely, and could not exactly understand why merchants like ourselves should abandon the sure prospect of a good and profitable sale on the line of Mecca, especially at such a season, for a wild-goose chase after traffic in the easterly desert. Accordingly, out of sheer good will to us and our business, though not, perhaps, without some degree of suspicion, they

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used every effort to persuade us to take the Meccan road, and our non-compliance could not but look very awkward and unreasonable, not to say more. However, others, who had paid more attention to our medical art and skill, made the lucky conjecture that our real object in thus obstinately insisting on going towards Djowf must be the search after treasures concealed, heaven knows when and by whom, in the depths of Arabia, and in quest of which Moghrebee adventurers, of equal reputation for their proficiency in the healing and in the occult sciences, occasionally traverse these frontiers. This happy idea led our friends to favour our design in the hopes of coming in for a share of the expected profit, and in consequence to set themselves seriously at work to find us guides, whom otherwise it would have proved no easy matter for us to have procured by our own unassisted research; and in this manner a very unseasonable difficulty was safely got over. And now to our march once more.

Several hours of a rapid trot had already borne us far from Ma'ān, and the reddening moonlight was almost faded from the west, when our guides halted on a little patch of dry grass amid the black and stony plain, and after interchanging a few words, made the camels kneel down, discharged them of their burdens, and then turned them loose to graze at will, while one of the band kept watch, and the rest lay down for a few hours' sleep near the baggage, which we had piled up close by; it was, however, a mere nap, and the first clear streak of light had hardly appeared in the east below the silvery morning star, when we were aroused to relade our beasts, and remount for our onward journey.

The sun rose, and then for the first time I witnessed what afterwards became a daily spectacle, the main act of Bedouin worship in their own land. Hardly had the first clear rays struck level across the horizon, than our nomade companions, facing the rising disk, began to recite alternately, but without any previous ablution or even dismounting from their beasts, certain formulas of adoration and invocation, nor desisted till the entire orb rode clear above the desert edge. Sun-worshippers as they were before the days of Mahomet, they still remain such; and all that the Ḥejāz prophet could say, or the

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doctors of his law repeat, touching the devil's horns between which the great day-star rises, as true Mahometans know or ought to know, and the consequently diabolical character of worship at such a time, and in a posture, too, which directs prayers and adorations then made exactly towards the Satanic head-gear, has been entirely thrown away on those obstinate adherents to ancient customs.

The fact is, that among the great mass of the nomade population, Mahometanism during the course of twelve whole centuries has made little or no impression either for good or ill; that it was equally ineffectual in this quarter at the period of its very first establishment, we learn from the Coran itself, and from early tradition of an authentic character. Not that the Bedouins on their part had any particular aversion from their inspired countryman or the Divine Unity, but simply because they were themselves, as they still are, incapable of receiving or retaining any of those serious influences and definite forms of thought and practice which then gave a permanent mould to the townsmen of Ḥejāz and many other provinces; just as the impress of a seal is lost in water, while retained in wax. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," is an imprecation which, if meant originally for Reuben, has descended in all its plenitude on the Bedouins of Arabia. At the same time, surrounded by, and often more or less dependent on, sincere and even bigoted followers of Islam, they have occasionally deemed it prudent to assume a kindred name and bearing, and thus to style themselves Mahometans for the time being, and even go through some prayer or religious formula, when indeed they can manage to learn any. For these very reasons they are in general yet more careful not to betray the existence among them of belief and doings directly at variance with the dominant creed of the land; much as gipsies are said, truly or not I cannot tell, to have done in Christian Europe for many centuries. Hence it is only when they feel themselves quite at home, and free from fear and restraint, that they venture to hoist their true colours; and it is seldom that a stranger has an opportunity of seeing them under such conditions. As for the half Bedouins of the Syrian, Egyptian, or Ḥejāz frontier, a constant intercourse with towns and populations where Islam is

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faith and law, has really given them some slight tincture of it in their turn; and hence the statement of several travellers who have come in contact with such and only such, that Bedouins are in general Mahometans like the rest, only lax ones; a statement only valid under the above limitations.

At a distant view most landscape seems level, and of a single blended tint; but nearer inspection will often show broken ground instead of plain, and many colours where we had seen but one. Mr. Finlay, the clever but partial author of "The Byzantine Empire," has declared in a sweeping way "that there is no greater delusion than to speak of the unity of the Christian Church." However this may be, I can affirm the perfect applicability of this sentence to Islam in the East. In no part of the world is there more of secret division, aversion, misbelief (taking Mahometanism for our standard) and unbelief than in those very lands which to a superficial survey seem absolutely identified in the one common creed of the Coran and its author. But to this subject we shall have to recur more than once when we advance further; let us now content ourselves with the Sherarat, whose isolated position in their "vast and howling wilderness" renders them a fair specimen of the genuine and unalloyed Bedouin species.

For them, I found them one and all no better acquainted than any honest English drover might be with the customary forms of Mahometan worship, with its prostrations and rehearsals, its ablutions and rites; of the pilgrimage they knew nothing, except in the way of plundering the pilgrims; and to the obligations and merits of the Fast of Ramadhan they seemed totally indifferent. But, on the other hand, sacrifices in which sheep or camels are devoutly slaughtered at the tombs of their dead kinsmen are of frequent occurrence, and supply the deficiency of the religious duties of Islam, perhaps with little disadvantage.

The extreme licence of Bedouin manners renders the restrictions or relaxations of Mahometan law on the subject of marriage unavailing or superfluous. Community would, I fear, better than polygamy, express their connubial condition, and nowhere has the phrase, "it is a clever child that knows its own father," a wider application. Indeed, in regard to this, as well as on many correlative points, into the details of which my

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readers must excuse me from entering, "dogs are better than we are," was a common expression of theirs, often repeated by them in my hearing, and I can give them credit for having so far at least spoken the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And after this preliminary sketch of Bedouin life and manners, to be completed a little farther on, let us now return to the daily course of our narrative.

It was about two hours before noon, and the heat was most oppressive, when we saw before us some scattered and dwarfish trees, indications of the waters of Wokba, towards which our course had been directed. While we were yet at some distance from the spot, one of our Bedouins urged forward his camel to a sort of canter, and set off in a circuitous line to assure himself that no individuals of a hostile tribe were lurking in the neighbourhood of the wells. But friend or enemy, nobody was there, all was silent; and the ruined walls of an abandoned village, scattered up and down on the gravelly slopes and by the dry bed of a winter torrent, looked hopelessly desolate in the steady glare of noon. Here several shallow pits, some half choked with stones, others offering a scanty supply of muddy and rather brackish water, presented themselves close by the thorny trees. From these wells we now filled the water-skins, an operation performed all the more carefully and thoroughly, since no other water whatever was to be had for four full days' journey ahead, put to it what speed we might; a serious consideration, especially in the latter days of June.

When all this was finished, we remounted, and set our camels' heads once more due east, while I turned to look round on the wide landscape. The blue range of Sheraa' was yet visible, though fast sinking in the distance, while before us and on either hand extended one weary plain in a black monotony of lifelessness. Only on all sides lakes of mirage lay mocking the eye with their clear and deceptive outline, whilst here and there some dark basaltic rock, cropping up at random through the level, was magnified by the refraction of the heated atmosphere into the semblance of a fantastic crag or overhanging mountain. Dreary land of death, in which even the face of an enemy were almost a relief amid such utter solitude. But for five whole days the little dried-up lizard of the plain,

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that looks as if he had never a drop of moisture in his ugly body, and the jerboaa', or field-rat of Arabia, were the only living creatures to console our view.

And now began a march during which we might have almost repented of our enterprise, had such a sentiment been any longer possible or availing. Day after day found us urging our camels to their utmost pace, for fifteen or sixteen hours together out of the twenty-four, under a well-nigh vertical sun, which the Ethiopians of Herodotus might reasonably be excused for cursing, with nothing either in the landscape around or in the companions of our way to relieve for a moment the eye or the mind. Then an insufficient halt for rest or sleep, at most of two or three hours, soon interrupted by the oft-repeated admonition, "if we linger here we all die of thirst," sounding in our ears; and then to remount our jaded beasts and push them on through the dark night, amid the constant probability of attack and plunder from roving marauders. For myself, I was, to mend matters, under the depressing influence of a tertian fever contracted at Ma'ān, and what between weariness and low spirits, began to imagine seriously that no waters remained before us except the waters of death for us and of oblivion for our friends. The days wore by like a delirious dream, till we were often almost unconscious of the ground we travelled over and of the journey on which we were engaged. One only herb appeared at our feet to give some appearance of variety and life; it was the bitter and poisonous colocynth of the desert.

Our order of march was this. Long before dawn we were on our way, and paced it till the sun, having attained about halfway between the horizon and the zenith, assigned the moment of alighting for our morning meal. This our Bedouins always took good care should be in some hollow or low ground, for concealment's sake; in every other respect we had ample liberty of choice, for one patch of black pebbles with a little sand and withered grass between was just like another; shade or shelter, or anything like them, was wholly out of the question in such "nakedness of the land." We then alighted, and my companion and myself would pile up the baggage into a sort of wall, to afford a half-screen from the scorching sun-rays, and here

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recline awhile. Next came the culinary preparations, in perfect accordance with our provisions, which like those of genuine Arab travellers were simple enough; namely, a bag of coarse flour mixed with salt, and a few dried dates, with no third item on the bill of fare. We now took a few handfuls of flour, and one of the Bedouins kneaded it with his unwashed hands or dirty bit of leather, pouring over it a little of the dingy water contained in the skins, and then patted out this exquisite paste into a large round cake, about an inch thick, and five or six inches across. Meanwhile another had lighted a fire of dry grass, colocynth roots, and dried camel's dung, till he had prepared a bed of glowing embers; among these the cake was now cast, and immediately covered up with hot ashes, and so left for a few minutes, then taken out, turned, and covered again, till at last half-kneaded, half-raw, half-roasted, and more than half-burnt, it was taken out to be broken up between the hungry band, and eaten scalding hot, before it should cool into an indescribable leathery substance, capable of defying the keenest appetite. A draught of dingy water was all its accompaniment.

The meal ended, we had again without loss of time to resume our way from mirage to mirage, till "slowly flaming over all, from heat to heat, the day decreased," and about an hour before sunset we would stagger off our camels as best we might, to prepare an evening feast of precisely the same description as that of the forenoon, or more often, for fear lest the smoke of our fire should give notice to some distant rover, to content ourselves with dry dates, and half an hour's rest on the sand. At last our dates, like Esop's bread sack, or that of Beyhas, his Arab prototype, came to an end; and then our supper was a soldier's one; what that is my military friends will know; but grit and pebbles excepted, there was no bed in our case. After which, to remount, and travel on by moon or star light, till a little before midnight we would lie down for just enough sleep to tantalize, not refresh.

"Wilt thou go on with me?" gentle reader, for an Arab trip? For myself, I confess that the remembrance of that exquisite little tale entitled the "Sleeping Beauty," by a friend, if he will allow me so to call him, whom to quote is to name, and of the moral therein contained—though its author archly denies its

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having any—did much to invigorate me on this and on similar occasions; it's "the many fail, the one succeeds," and the "trust to light on something fair," kept up my courage, and thus may be fairly said to have "hooked it to some useful end," though perhaps not precisely the one intended by Mr. Tennyson. But my reader, like myself, must labour yet awhile through the difficulties of this desert "hedge," till he breaks in on the fair one in all her beauty, if, like the prince, his courage does not fail him; better things lie before us in the next chapter.

But in addition to what encouragement my comrade and myself could gather from memory and inner thought, our companions too cheered us ever and anon, by assuring us that although this hasty manner of travelling was absolutely necessary in a land alike beset by drought and danger, we might hope for easier marches and lighter privations so soon as we should have reached the boundary frontier of Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed, the sovereign of Djebel Shomer. These desirable limits, said they, commenced at Wadi Serḥān, or the Valley of Serḥān, which we were fast approaching, and where water was good and copious, while the mighty name of Ṭelāl protected it far and wide from fear of enemies and marauders by night and by day.

Much did our Bedouins talk of Ṭelāl, and much extol his vigour, his equity, his active vigilance, his military prowess, though at the same time they repined at his unwarrantable repression of Bedouin liberty, and the restraints he imposed on the innate rights of nomades to plunder, rob, and murder at their own free discretion—complaints which, contrary to the intention of our informants, rather raised than diminished our esteem for this ruler, be he who he might. We could, however, as yet obtain but little exact information about the personal history or the political position of this prince. Whether he was of supreme or of subaltern power, whether founder of his kingdom, or heir, what might be the extent or character of the kingdom itself, and much else, we would fain have learnt, and tried to gather from Salim, 'Alee, and Djordee, but to no end: their ideas and language on a matter so far above them were alike confused. All that we could for the moment know with certainty, was that this chief resided in a town called Ḥā'yel,

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situated in Djebel Shomer, somewhere to the south-east; that he was very powerful; that in his dominions neither plunder nor other violation of public order was permitted; and that from Wadi Serḥān, south and east, his word was law. With such information we were obliged to content ourselves for the present, in hope that nearer approach would make all clear.

We knew already that Central Arabia belonged, at least in part, to the Wahhabee dynasty. With the name "Wahhabee," and its general import, my readers are doubtless too well acquainted to require of me here an antecedent explanation, the more that several chapters of this work will almost exclusively regard the land and people who have given to that name its wide celebrity. Of Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed in particular, as a ruler somehow connected with the Wahhabee, I had also heard mention, though vague, in Syria and at Damascus; where some distinguished him from and others confounded him with the dynasty of Nejed. So putting this and that together, we now guessed that he must be a subordinate ruler, a sort of provincial governor in Wahhabee behalf; a conjecture which, like many others, proved neither exactly right nor entirely wrong.

It was now the 22nd of June, and the fifth day since our departure from the wells of Woḳba. The water in the skins had little more to offer to our thirst than muddy dregs, and as yet no sign appeared of a fresh supply. At last about noon we drew near some hillocks of loose gravel and sandstone; a little on our right our Bedouins conversed together awhile, and then turned their course and ours in that direction. "Hold fast on your camels, for they are going to be startled and jump about," said Salim to us. Why the camels should be startled I could not understand; when on crossing the mounds just mentioned, we suddenly came on five or six black tents, of the very poorest description, pitched near some wells excavated in the gravelly hollow below. The reason of Salim's precautionary hint now became evident, for our silly beasts started at first sight of the tents, as though they had never seen the like before, and then scampered about, bounding friskily here and there, till what between their jolting (for a camel's run much resembles that of a cow) and our own laughing, we could hardly keep on their backs. However, their thirst soon prevailed over their timidity,

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and they left off their pranks to approach the well's edge, and sniff at the water below.

We alighted. Immediately the denizens of the tents, a few women and one or two old men belonging to the Sherarat tribe, which is scattered over the whole of this desert, approached to give their "Marḥaba," "Ya'hla," i.e., "welcome," "honoured guests," and so forth, and to ask many questions why and whence our journey. Nor was their curiosity without reason; the route which had brought us was one little travelled at any time, especially by men from Damascus or its neighbourhood, and for such our dress and accent gave us out to be; and still less at this period of the year, in the very height of summer. But we were too tired for much discourse, and far more desirous to get into a little shade after so long a running, than to hold protracted parley. So we left our Bedouins, themselves, too, well nigh worn out with fatigue, to draw water as they could from the wells and pour it into the little hollows close by for the benefit of their camels, an operation in which we should have been more of a hindrance than a help; and, after due permission asked and granted, we crept into a low and narrow tent, whose black coverings were very exactly calculated for the exclusion of the luminous and transmission of all the caloriferous rays of the mid-day sun. Here we lay stretched out on the sand till it should please our companions to come and force us to rise. This the wretches attempted to do after a very short interval; but we answered, that as we had now got a good supply of water, and had reached, or nearly so, the boundary limits of Ebn-Rasheed, they could have no sufficient motive for being in such a tremendous haste. Salim, arch-weary as he was, admitted the force of our argument, and we remained under cover till the declining sun and cooler air. Meanwhile the mistress of the tent, an ugly good-natured looking hag, like most Bedouin dames, entertained us with a long diatribe on the tyranny of Ebn-Rasheed, and the coercion he exercised over her countrymen, from which we concluded that he must be simply doing the duty of an order-loving king, and esteemed him accordingly.

When in the afternoon we resumed our way once more, we found the general appearance of the desert somewhat modified by larger patches of sand or grass on its black surface, and these

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continued to increase in number and size as we went on. Next day, the 23rd of the month, yet clearer signs of our approach to Wadi Sirḥan became visible, and as we took a somewhat northerly direction in order to join in with that valley, we sighted far off in the extreme distance a blue range of hills, running from west to east, and belonging to the Syro-Arabic waste, though unnoticed, to the best of my knowledge, in European maps, perhaps because undiscovered, or at least insufficiently explored. Meanwhile the sand-patches continued to increase and deepen on all sides, and our Bedouins flattered themselves with reaching Wadi Sirḥan before nightfall.

Here, however, an incident occurred which had well nigh put a premature end to the travels and the travellers together. My readers, no less than myself, must have heard or read many a story of the semoom, or deadly wind of the desert, but for me I had never yet met it in full force; and its modified form, or shelook, to use the Arab phrase, that is, the sirocco of the Syrian waste, though disagreeable enough, can hardly ever be termed dangerous. Hence I had been almost inclined to set down the tales told of the strange phenomena and fatal effects of this "poisoned gale" in the same category with the moving pillars of sand, recorded in many works of higher historical pretensions than "Thalaba." At those perambulatory columns and sand-smothered caravans the Bedouins, whenever I interrogated them on the subject, laughed outright, and declared that beyond an occasional dust storm, similar to those which any one who has passed a summer in Scinde can hardly fail to have experienced, nothing of the romantic kind just alluded to occurred in Arabia. But when questioned about the semoom, they always treated it as a much more serious matter, and such in real earnest we now found it.

It was about noon, and such a noon as a summer solstice can offer in the unclouded Arabian sky over a scorched desert, when abrupt and burning gusts of wind began to blow by fits from the south, while the oppressiveness of the air increased every moment, till my companion and myself mutually asked each other what this could mean, and what was to be its result. We turned to enquire of Salem, but he had already wrapped up his face in his mantle, and, bowed down and crouching on the

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neck of his camel, replied not a word. His comrades, the two Sherarat Bedouins, had adopted a similar position, and were equally silent. At last, after repeated interrogations, Salem, instead of replying directly to our questioning, pointed to a small black tent, providentially at no great distance in front, and said, "try to reach *that*, if we can get there we are saved." He added, "take care that your camels do not stop and lie down;" and then, giving his own several vigorous blows, relapsed into muffled silence.

We looked anxiously towards the tent; it was yet a hundred yards off, or more. Meanwhile the gusts grew hotter and more violent, and it was only by repeated efforts that we could urge our beasts forward. The horizon rapidly darkened to a deep violet hue, and seemed to draw in like a curtain on every side; while at the same time a stifling blast, as though from some enormous oven opening right on our path, blew steadily under the gloom; our camels too began, in spite of all we could do, to turn round and round and bend their knees preparing to lie down. The semoom was fairly upon us.

Of course we had followed our Arabs' example by muffling our faces, and now with blows and kicks we forced the staggering animals onwards to the only asylum within reach. So dark was the atmosphere, and so burning the heat, that it seemed that hell had risen from the earth, or descended from above. But we were yet in time, and at the moment when the worst of the concentrated poison-blast was coming around, we were already prostrate one and all within the tent, with our heads well wrapped up, almost suffocated indeed, but safe; while our camels lay without like dead, their long necks stretched out on the sand awaiting the passing of the gale.

On our first arrival the tent contained a solitary Bedouin woman, whose husband was away with his camels in the Wadi Sirḥan. When she saw five handsome men, like us, rush thus suddenly into her dwelling without a word of leave or salutation, she very properly set up a scream to the tune of the four crown pleas, murder, arson, robbery, and I know not what else. Salem hastened to reassure her by calling out "friends," and without more words threw himself flat on the ground. All followed his example in silence.

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We remained thus for about ten minutes, during which a still heat like that of red-hot iron slowly passing over us was alone to be felt. Then the tent walls began again to flap in the returning gusts, and announced that the worst of the semoom had gone by. We got up, half dead with exhaustion, and unmuffled our faces. My comrades appeared more like corpses than living men, and so, I suppose, did I. However, I could not forbear, in spite of warnings, to step out and look at the camels; they were still lying flat as though they had been shot. The air was yet darkish, but before long it brightened up to its usual dazzling clearness. During the whole time that the semoom lasted, the atmosphere was entirely free from sand or dust; so that I hardly know how to account for its singular obscurity.

Our hostess, once freed from her not unwarrantable alarms, had also remained motionless and well wrapped-up in a corner of the tent till the worst was over, and then, by the active vivacity of her tongue, she gave the best possible proof that the semoom left no dumbness by way of symptom behind it, and satisfied all her pent-up curiosity regarding us after the involuntary restraint imposed by the circumstances of our first introduction. Late in the evening we continued our way; and next day early entered Wadi Sirḥan, where the character of our journey underwent a considerable modification. But before narrating what befel us in this new locality, a few words about its general situation, features, and its relative bearings to the surrounding desert may here find a fitting place. Not that Wadi Sirḥan is by any means unknown to geographers or travellers, but some particulars regarding it, especially in its southerly branch, may interest the general reader, nor be wholly unprofitable to scientific research.

South of the Syrian waste, and reaching from the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea right across to the valley of the Euphrates, runs a broad desert belt, of a description for the most very similar to that portion which we had just traversed. The soil is hard and stony, with few sources of water rising to the surface, even in the winter season; in spring it is thinly sprinkled with grass and herbs, in summer and autumn absolutely dry; its general appearance level, monotonous, and desolate. Here

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and there an isolated rock, or a cluster of low hills, more rarely a continuous range of scanty elevation, but bold in outline, interrupts its uniformity. This is the northerly segment of that great desert-ring which encircles central Arabia, and renders so difficult all regular communication between it and the outlying lands of Syria and Bagdad; while it cuts it off from the maritime provinces, such as the Ḥedjāz, the Yemen, and 'Omān. A little further southward this same desert circle, though uninterrupted, assumes a different type, but of that we shall have more to say hereafter, when our time comes to traverse its onward spaces.

However, the northerly desert, with which we have at present to do, offers, in spite of all its dreariness, some spots of a comparatively better cast, where water is less scanty and vegetation less niggard. These spots are the favourite resorts of Bedouins, and serve too to direct the ordinary routes of whatever travellers, trade-led or from other motives, may venture on this wilderness. These oases, if indeed they deserve the name, are formed by a slight depression in the surrounding desert surface, and take at times the form of a long valley, or of an oblong patch, where rock and pebble give place to a light soil more or less intermixed with sand, and concealing under its surface a tolerable supply of moisture at no great distance below ground. Here in consequence bushes and herbs spring up, and grass, if not green all the year round, is at least of somewhat longer duration than elsewhere; certain fruit-bearing plants, of a nature to suffice for meagre Bedouin existence, grow here spontaneously; in a word, man and beast find not exactly comfortable accommodation, but the absolutely needful supply. Such a spot is Wadi Sirḥan, literally "the Valley of the Wolf," probably so called from some old tradition in which that animal made a principal figure, but the precise origin of the name is lost amid the uncertainty of past Arab days. This long and sinuous depression bears in the main from north-west to south-east, or nearly so, and reaches across half the northern desert like a long ladder whose head is placed near Bosra in the Howran, at no great distance from Damascus, while its base rests on the Djowf, the preliminary province and vestibule of central Arabia. Thus it affords the customary route for mer-

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cantile business to and fro between Syria and the Djowf. In addition, the numerous Syro-Arabic tribes of the Ru'alah Bedouins frequent its upper extremity, while the centre and south-eastern portions are almost exclusively tenanted by the Sherarat Arabs. No other valley of equal length, and, I cannot say equal fertility, but of less absolute barrenness, exists in this part of the country. Water is almost everywhere to be found throughout Wadi Sirḥan at a depth varying from ten to twenty feet, and the vegetation offers a certain degree of abundance and variety.

Here begins, or, to speak more correctly, began at the date of our journey, the domain of Ṭelal Ebn Rasheed, prince of Shomer, whose influence extends and whose name enforces respect or even submission over the entire desert from Wadi Sirḥan eastward, and all along the valley itself, besides a disputed title on the west and north. For although these wilds, no less than Byron's ocean, defy all attempts of man to reclaim or change them, yet the tracts which adjoin centres of authority and organized rule may and do become in some measure amenable to civilized government, just as a portion of the sea bordering some powerful coast may with right be said to belong to such or such a flag, whose symbol the vessels which ply there are in reason obliged to respect, unless indeed they be strong enough to dispute. Much the same is the case of Bedouins borne on their "ships of the desert" over this land-sea; and thus, through the medium of the Djowf and of its governor, Ṭelāl makes his orders obeyed throughout the southern half of Wadi Sirḥan and the adjoining regions.

It was on the 24th of June that we entered this valley, glad to find ourselves at last on the high road—though the phrase hardly suits a land where no roads soever exist—to the Djowf; while our Bedouins, equally tired with ourselves of chawing dry dates and cinder cake, entertained us with anticipatory descriptions of the hospitable greeting we should daily meet with in the Wadi of the Wolf.

In fact we had not long wound among the little sandy hills which stud this lowground, when we saw far and near planted amid the bushes numerous black tents, the dwellings of Kedar, doubtless much resembling what they were when likened by Solomon to his dusky Egyptian bride, (though I hardly know whether

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the latter could have taken the simile for a compliment,) but of so miserable an appearance that we felt little confidence in the realization of the "flattering tale" told us by Bedouin hope. The truth is, that among the miserable tribes of nomades that infest Arabia, the Sherarat are the most miserable. They own very few flocks of sheep; a horse is a rarity in the tribe; their entire wealth, if wealth it be, consists in their camels, and certainly of these last there is no want;—unlike the northern Bedouins, Seda'a, Ru'alah, Fiḍha'an, and their brethren, whose large droves of sheep, joined to numerous studs of horses, supply them with a certain opulence and means of trade, enabling them to live if not altogether like civilized beings, at least free from the privations and misery of mere savage life, the melancholy lot of our new friends, the Sherarat Arabs.

Scattered over the whole belt of desert just described, with Wadi Sirḥan for their ordinary gathering-place, the Sherarat acknowledge no common chief of their own, no general leader or head. They are divided and subdivided into countless bands, each of which has a separate chief, worthy in every respect of his subjects. Almost all, however, chiefs and clansmen, have been of late brought collectively under some kind of subservience by the iron arm of Ṭelāl, and pay him accordingly their tribute of yearly camels and daily grumbling. But the character and condition of these nomades will be sufficiently illustrated by our intercourse with them now about to commence.

Passing tent after tent, and leaving behind us many a tattered Bedouin and grazing camel, Salem at last indicated to us a group of habitations, two or three of which seemed of somewhat more ample dimensions than the rest, and informed us that our supper that night (for the afternoon was already on the decline) would be at the cost of these dwellings. "Ajaweed," *i. e.*, "generous fellows," he subjoined, to encourage us by the prospect of a handsome reception. Of course we could only defer to his better judgment; and in a few minutes were alongside of the black goat's-hair coverings where lodged our intended hosts.

The chief or chieflet, for he was no less, came out, and interchanged a few words of masonic laconism with Salem. The latter then came up to us, where we remained halted in expectation, led our camels to a little distance from the tents, made

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them kneel down, helped us to disburden them, and while we installed ourselves on a sandy slope opposite to the abodes of the tribe, recommended us to keep a sharp look-out after our baggage, since there might be pickers and stealers among our hosts, for all "Ajaweed" as they were. Disagreeable news; for "Ajaweed" in an Arab mouth corresponds the nearest possible to our English "gentlemen." Now, if the gentlemen were thieves, what must the blackguards be? We put a good face on it, and then seated ourselves in dignified gravity on the sand awaiting the further results of our guide's negotiations.

For some time we remained undisturbed, though not unnoticed; a group of Arabs had collected round our companions at the tent door, and were engaged in getting from them all possible information, especially about us and our baggage, which last was an object of much curiosity, not to say cupidity. Next came our turn. The chief, his family (women excepted), his intimate followers, and some twenty others, young and old, boys and men, came up, and after a brief salutation, Bedouin-wise, for the complimentary preludes that Turkish or Persian ceremoniousness has introduced elsewhere are not here in fashion, seated themselves in a semicircle before us. Every man held a short crooked stick for camel-driving in his hand, to gesticulate with when speaking, or to play with in the intervals of conversation, while the younger members of society, less prompt in discourse, politely employed their leisure in staring at us, or in picking up dried pellets of dirt from the sand and tossing them about.

But how am I to describe their conversation, their questions and answers, their manners and gests? "A sensible person in this city is like a man tied up among a drove of mules in a stable," I once heard from a respectable stranger in the Syrian town of Ḥoms, a locality proverbial for the sullen stupidity of its denizens. But among Bedouins in the desert, where the advantages of the stable are wanting, the guest rather resembles a man in the middle of a field among untied mules frisking and kicking their heels in all directions around him. Here you may see human nature at its lowest stage, or very nearly; one sprawls stretched out on the sand, another draws unmeaning lines with the end of his stick, a third grins, a

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fourth asks purportless or impertinent questions, or cuts jokes meant for witty, but in fact only coarse in the extreme. Meanwhile the boys thrust themselves forward without restraint, and interrupt their elders, their betters I can hardly say, without the smallest respect or deference.

And yet in all this there is no real intention of rudeness, no desire to annoy; quite the reverse. They sincerely wish to make themselves agreeable to the new comers, to put them at their ease, nay, to do them what good service they can, only they do not exactly know how to set about it; if they violate all laws of decorum or courtesy, it is out of sheer ignorance, not malice prepense; and amid the aimlessness of an utterly uncultivated mind they occasionally show indications of considerable innate tact and shrewdness; while through all the fickleness proper to men accustomed to no moral or physical restraint, there appears the groundwork of a manly and generous character, such as a Persian or a Turk seldom, if ever, offers. Their defects are inherent to their condition, their redeeming qualities are their own.

What better, in fact, can be expected of men whose whole lives have passed in driving camels about open wastes, without law, without religion, without instruction, without example? And instead of all these, amid extreme want, unceasing privation, frequent danger, and security never. It is the education of a savage; and that such a school should send out such pupils is perfectly natural. I only wish that those who indulge their imagination in ideal portraits of desert life, and conceive the Bedouins and their condition to be worthy of admiration or of envy, would pass but three days in a Sherarat encampment, and see, not through the medium of romancing narratives, written *à priori*, as they say, for ready currency, but with their own eyes, to what a depth of degradation one of the noblest races earth affords can descend under the secular influence of nomade life.

I say one of the noblest races of earth, for that the Arabs of inhabited lands and organized governments really are. Indeed, after having travelled much and made pretty intimate acquaintance with many races, African, Asiatic, and European, I should hardly be inclined to give the preference to any over the

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genuine unmixed clans of central and Eastern Arabi. Now these last-mentioned populations are identical in blood and in tongue with the nomades of this desert, yet how immeasurably superior! The difference between a barbarous Highlander and an English gentleman, in "Rob Roy" or "Waverley" is hardly less striking. Let me subjoin a specimen of Bedouin conversation for my reader's fuller information.

"What are you? what is your business?" so runs the ordinary and unprefaced opening of the discourse. To which we answer, "Physicians from Damascus, and our business is whatsoever God may put in our way." The next question will be about the baggage; some one pokes it with a stick, to draw attention to it, and says, "What is this? have you any little object to sell us?"

Any one acquainted with the niceties of the Arab language might at first intercourse with this people remark that, however deteriorated may be their social condition, their idiom is, with very slight exceptions, entirely unvitiated, and follows in general the minute rules and exigencies of what is sometimes, though very incorrectly, called the "grammatical dialect." But to this subject we shall have again to recur, and add fuller explanation when we reach Djebel Shomer, where the current language has attained, or, to say better, preserved, its purest and most seductively eloquent form. Leaving, therefore, philology for the moment, let us return to our Bedouins, whom we left in a great state of excitement about the baggage.

We fight shy of selling: to open out our wares and chattels in full air, on the sand, and amid a crowd whose appearance and circumstances offer but a poor guarantee for the exact observance of the eighth commandment, would be hardly prudent or worth our while. After several fruitless trials they desist from their request. Another, who is troubled by some bodily infirmity, for which all the united faculties of London and Paris might prescribe in vain, a withered hand, for instance, or stone-blind of an eye, asks for medicine, which no sooner applied shall, in his expectation, suddenly restore him to perfect health and corporal integrity. But I had been already forewarned that to doctor a Bedouin, even under the most favourable circumstances, or a camel, is pretty much the

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same thing, and with about an equal chance of success or advantage. I politely decline. He insists; I turn him off with a joke.

"So you laugh at us, O you inhabitants of towns. We are Bedouins, we do not know your customs," replies he, in a whining tone; while the boys grin unconscionably at the discomfiture of their tribesman.

"Ya woleyd," or "young fellow" (for so they style every human male from eight to eighty without distinction), "will you not fill my pipe?" says one, who has observed that mine was not idle, and who, though well provided with a good stock of dry tobacco tied up in a rag at his greasy waist-belt, thinks the moment a fair opportunity for a little begging, since neither medicine nor merchandize is to be had.

But Salem, seated amid the circle, makes me a sign not to comply. Accordingly I evade the demand. However, my petitioner goes on begging, and is imitated by two or three others, each of whom thrusts forward, (a true Irish hint,) a bit of marrow-bone with a hole drilled in one side to act for a pipe, or a porous stone, not uncommon thoughout the desert, clumsily fashioned into a smoking apparatus, a sort of primitive meerschaum.

As they grow rude, I pretend to become angry, thus to cut the matter short. "We are your guests, O you Bedouins; are you not ashamed to beg of us?" "Never mind, excuse us; those are ignorant fellows, ill-bred clowns, &c.," interposes one close by the chief's side; and whose dress is in somewhat better condition than that of the other half and three-quarter naked individuals who complete the assembly.

"Will you not people the pipe for your little brother?" subjoins the chief himself, producing an empty one with a modest air. Bedouin language, like that of most Orientals, abounds with not ungraceful imagery, and accordingly "people" here means "fill." Salem gives me a wink of compliance; I take out a handful of tobacco, and put it on his long shirt-sleeve, which he knots over it, and looks uncommonly well pleased. At any rate they are easily satisfied, these Bedouins.

In such conversation, and more of like tenor, the hour wears away. Some get up and depart, others take their places, all

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have their observations or enquiries to make; and we have full opportunity of studying their character, propensities, and customs; the more so as, because, not guessing who we really are, they are completely off their guard.

But the chieflet, after getting his supply of tobacco, the main object of his visit, were truth to be told, has retired to his tent, there to give suitable orders for the coming entertainment. Shortly after we see a knot of idle individuals gathered together a little in the background; this indicates the spot where a sheep or camel, according to circumstances, is being slaughtered for the evening's feast. A little after we see its carcase stretched out near the corner of the tent, to be cut up by several operators amid a crowd of spectators deeply interested in the process, for the whole encampment is to share in the banquet prepared on occasion of the guests.

We are now left awhile alone, for cooking is too important an affair to permit the absence of any unoccupied neighbours. In Europe too many cooks are said to have an injurious effect upon the broth, but here the process is far too simple for spoiling. To light a fire under a huge never-scoured cauldron, to set the water boiling, and then to throw in the quarters of the slaughtered animal to seethe in their own unskimmed grease, till about two-thirds cooked; that is the whole culinary art and the *ne plus ultra* of a Bedouin feast.

All this, however, takes some time; fires lighted in the open air do not act so quickly as they would in a stove and kitchen, and large masses of meat cannot be speedily reduced to something like an edible condition. Accordingly the stars are already in the sky, and the night breeze has cooled the sands, before an unusual bustle among the bystanders and a burst of sparks show that the cauldron has been at last removed off the stones which served it for fire-place. The water is then poured off, the meat piled pell-mell into a large and very dirty wooden bowl, and thus, without any other accompaniment, seasoning, or aught else, placed on the ground about half-way between us and the tents.

The chief, or some unbreeched youngster of his family, comes up to us with the customary "Tefaḍḍaloo," or "do us the favour," that is, of accepting the invitation. We approach

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the bowl, but ere we can take our place a rush has already been made from all quarters towards the common centre of attraction, and a large circle is awaiting in silence the signal to begin. This is given by the chief, who again repeats the formula of welcome, and Salem and my comrade (for I confess myself to have been always rather backward on these occasions, not for want of hunger, but of liking,) fish out a large joint of half raw meat, and pulling at it in opposite directions, divide it into more manageable morsels. Then every one falls to. Thirty or more unwashed hands are in the bowl, and within five minutes' space, bones too clean picked to offer much solace to the lean dogs on guard around are all that remains of the banquet.

"Why do you not eat? eat; go to work at it; O, a hundred welcomes to you, our worthy guests," reiterates at short intervals our host, and shows the way by his own good example. I may remark, that were the sultan himself in our place, he would get no greater variety or choicer fare, for the simple reason that the Sherarat have nothing better to present.

Water, with a strong ammoniacal flavour, acquired from the over-proximity of camels to the wells whence it has been drawn, is now passed round to whoever desires drink in a sort of small pail, which might in England find its appropriate place at a colt's muzzle. However, while we partake of its contents, our next hand neighbour will not fail to say "Hena'," or "good health," by way of a compliment, and a hint too to pass him the bowl.

We then retire to our sand slope and baggage; for to sleep within the host's tent is not customary in genuine Bedouin life. The smallness of the habitation where a family of all sexes and ages are crowded together, and its non-partition into separate chambers, fully explains and justifies this precautionary usage, which has nothing to do with want of hospitality.

The night air in these wilds is life and health itself. We sleep soundly, unharassed by the anticipation of an early summons to march next morning, for both men and beasts have alike need of a full day's repose. When the sun has risen we are invited to enter the chief's tent and to bring our baggage under its shelter. A main object of our entertainer's, in proposing this move, is to try whether he cannot render our visit some way profitable to himself, by present or purchase. Whatever polite-

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ness he can muster is accordingly brought into play, and a large bowl of fresh camel's milk, an excellent beverage, now appears on the stage. I must leave to chemical analysts to decide why this milk will not furnish butter, for such is the fact, and content myself with bearing witness to its very nutritious and agreeable qualities.

We then, at the earnest request of the chief, his wife, sisters, and cousins, and for their sole and private inspection, open a corner of our sacks, and after much haggling sell a piece of cloth, a head-dress, or some similar object. The difficulty lies in the paying; for not only our friend is by no means over-ready to part with his cash, but he is moreover quite ignorant respecting the specific value of its component pieces. Accordingly a council of the wisest heads in the tribe has to be called to decide on the value of each separate coin, and, after that, to sum-totalize, which is, for Bedouins, a yet more Herculean effort of intellect, and the account must be cast up item by item full a dozen times before he knows whether he had twenty or thirty piastres in his dirty hand.

Of the coinage current in Arabia I will speak when we arrive at Djebel Shomer or Nejed; for to convey a clear idea of this matter would require too long a digression from the Bedouins.

The day passes on. About noon our host naturally enough supposes us hungry, and accordingly a new dish is brought in; it looks much like a bowl full of coarse red paste, or bran mixed with ochre. This is Samḥ, a main article of subsistence to the Bedouins of Northern Arabia. Throughout this part of the desert grows a small herbaceous and tufted plant, with juicy stalks and a little ovate yellow-tinted leaf; the flowers are of a brighter yellow, with many stamens and pistils. When the blossoms fall off, there remains in place of each a four-leaved capsule about the size of an ordinary pea, and this, when ripe, opens to show a mass of minute reddish seeds, resembling grit in feel and appearance, but farinaceous in substance. The ripening season is in July, when old and young, men and women, all are out to collect the unsown and untoiled-for harvest. The capsules are gathered, the seed separated from them, and kept like a stock of flour for the ensuing year. These seeds, when wanted for use, are coarsely ground in a hand-mill, then mixed

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with water, and boiled into the substance which we now had before us. Its taste and quality were pretty well hit off by Salem, who described it, "not so good as wheat, and rather better than barley-meal."

Much did we admire the care of Providence in thus providing a subsistence for these nomades, who might else be often exposed to all the horrors of absolute famine. Too lazy by far to till the earth, even where a sufficient abundance of subterraneous water renders it susceptible of cultivation, they would, but for this plant, have been reduced to live on the milk and flesh of their camels, an insufficient resource if no other were at hand. But the Samḥ, growing up everywhere without labour, and productive without culture, supplies the deficiency and forms their staple article of food, their very staff of life; and although it may not prove entirely satisfactory or over-palatable to those accustomed to better fare, it suffices for men who have seldom or never tasted anything better or more nutritious.

Another gift of nature is the Meṣa'a, a fruit well known to Bedouins, though neglected by all else. Its shrub attains two or three feet in height, woody and tangled, with small and pointed leaves of a lively green, and a little red star-like flower. This in June gives place to a berry much resembling in size, colour, and taste our own red currant, though inferior to it in flavour, while its sweetness predominates too much over its acidity. The Bedouins collect and greedily devour it, or, boiling it down with a little water, procure a sort of molasses, much esteemed by them, but by them alone. This, with the Samḥ just mentioned, camel's milk, and an occasional repast of butcher's meat, though that is a rare luxury, forms all their list of eatables.

No one throughout the entire Sherarat tribe can boast a coffee-pot or coffee. Such articles are indeed common among the Syro-Arab Bedouins, enriched by the possession of sheep and horses and the neighbourhood of towns, not to mention frequent acquisitions of plunder from peasants or travellers, thanks to the weakness of that shadow of shadows for all good, Ottoman rule. But here, in Arabia proper, sheep are the most exclusive property of townsmen and villagers, and they are strong enough to keep their own, while vigorous

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governments have for years pressed on the Bedouins with a rod of iron, and reduced them to their normal condition, that of mere camel-drivers, and nothing more. But if they are somewhat the losers under such a system, the land is much a gainer; and I think most of my readers will easily admit that wealth and security for peasants and merchants may well outweigh the advantages of nomade licence and the insolent lawlessness of the clans of the Syrian desert—only desert because in the possession of Bedouins.

Yet those very lands—my readers will pardon me a moment's digression from Arabia to Syria—those very lands, now so utterly waste, were in old times and under a better rule widely cultivated and full of populous life, as the numerous ruins strewn over their desolation yet attest; while the traces of many a well, now choked with sand and stones, show where water might readily be had and tillage abound.

But for this skill and steadiness in labour is required, and the Bedouins, whom Turkish misrule has made lords of the soil, possess neither; all they require or care about is open pasture, and in that view the less cultivation encroaches on their wilds the better. Hence not only do they decline for themselves any endeavour to improve their territory, or draw out its hidden resources, but even oppose such an attempt when made by others as injurious to their own rights; and in consequence are the hereditary enemies of governments, villages, and peasants, not out of mere rapacity alone, but on a set system, like the dog of the story in the manger, who, though he did not himself eat the straw, yet at least wanted it to lie upon. Enough of this; let us return to Arabia and the Sherarat.

The military strength of the tribe, as may be gathered from what I have already said concerning them, is small, too scattered for collective action, and too poor to provide themselves with effective arms. What weapons they have consist merely of clumsy matchlocks and rusty spears.

Further on, in Central Arabia, there exist tribes of much greater wealth, strength, and organization; such are the Shomer, south of Djowf, the Meṭeyr and 'Oṭeybah in the midlands, the Ajman and Benoo-Khalid to the east, of whom more hereafter. But all these taken together are very few in number

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when compared to the fixed population, a six or seventh at best, judging from the muster-rolls of the different Arab provinces, and only appear in war time under the character of auxiliaries to the one or other faction among the townsmen, not as independent or hostile troops. The Wahhabee government has, blow after blow, "broken their thorn," to use a significant Arab phrase; and though all are not equally poor or barbarous in their customs with the Sherarat, they are even more submissive to the ruling power, nor dare stir save at its bidding.

All this will receive further and more complete elucidation in the course of the present work. But considering that we shall before long meet with subjects of much greater importance and higher interest, I have thought it advisable to give on this first occasion a general view of these nomade tribes who will hereafter hold a less prominent position in our narrative, as in our advance towards more civilized lands we in great measure exchange deserts and Bedouins for towns and townsmen.

A day's rest had now put us in condition to resume our way next morning amid shrubs and sand-hills down the valley that winds between its stony banks like a broad shallow river to the south. We fell in with many Bedouins of course, and passed several large encampments, sometimes halting in them for a meal, and sometimes not, besides some occasional sale of trifling value to keep up our mercantile character. No particular adventure here occurred worth recording, though our journey was far from dull, thanks to much amusement in laughing, now with, now at, our companions or hosts. They on their side entertained us with long stories of wandering life and adventures of stray or stolen camels, of swaggering war heroes, and lovers full as adventurous as any Romeo but somewhat less delicate; of divorces without the Act, and alliances in which the turning point and main object seemed to be the supper of butcher's meat, exactly like what we had ourselves enjoyed more than once; and on this subject, often introduced, they expatiated with more than wonted eloquence, and very rightly, for it is the Paradise of the Bedouin, who little knows of or cares for any other either in this world or elsewhere.

"What will you do on coming into God's presence for judgment after so graceless a life?" said I one day to a spirited

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young Sherarat, whose long matted lovelocks, and some pretension to dandihood, for the desert has its dandies too, amid all his ragged accoutrements, accorded very well with his conversation, which was nowise of the most edifying description. "What will we do?" was his unhesitating answer, "why, we will go up to God and salute him, and if he proves hospitable (gives us meat and tobacco), we will stay with him; if otherwise, we will mount our horses and ride off." This is a fair specimen of Bedouin ideas touching another world, and were I not afraid of an indictment for profaneness, I might relate fifty similar anecdotes at least. Nor did I ever meet, among the genuine nomade tribes, with any individual who took a more spiritual view whether of the Deity, of the soul of man, or of any other disembodied being soever. God is for them a chief, residing mainly, it would seem, in the sun, with which indeed they in a manner identify him, as we have already noticed, somewhat more powerful of course than their own head man, or even than Ṭelāl himself, but in other respects of much the same style and character. The spirits of their frequent ghost stories, such as Ghool, Djann, Maradah, and the like, frightful beings by all accounts, and somewhat resembling the Kobolds, Nixes, and Wild Hunters of our German neighbours, are, for all their diabolical propensities, very corporeal beings, and can even intermarry with the human race, though the children arising from such alliances are said to be, and no wonder, of a remarkably bad disposition. The souls of the dead, for their part, are little better; they are pleased with, nay, require, sacrifices at their tombs, and the blood thus shed nourishes and satiates them.

However, with all this coarse materialism of thought, Bedouins know how to distinguish between virtue and vice, at least in their broader forms; all admit that murder, treachery, robbery, and adultery are Sheyn, *i.e.*, "a shame," though they allow such doings, and especially the two latter, to be not unfrequent among them. However, to do them justice, they are not a bloodthirsty race, and avoid murder as much as is consistent with a state of habitual brigandage.

Their feuds are continual, but at little cost of life; the main object of a raid is booty, not slaughter; and the Bedouin, though

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a terrible braggart, has at heart little inclination for killing or being killed. They will relate for hours together raw-head and bloody-bones stories of their wars and combats with this or that tribe, and give in a gazette worthy of Balaclava or Waterloo, till when you come to examine coolly into the number of the victims, thus dashingly designated by "thousands," your humanity will be consoled by finding them reduced to the more moderate numbers of "two" or "three," and even these you must not set down at once for dead, as they were probably only "slightly wounded," and will reappear alive and well in next day's report.

One cause of this great sparing of human life is the absence of all those national and religious principles which so often in other countries, and even more in Asia than in Europe, urge on men to bloodshed. The Bedouin does not fight for his home, he has none; nor for his country, that is anywhere; nor for his honour, he never heard of it; nor for his religion, he owns and cares for none. His only object in war is the temporary occupation of some bit of miserable pasture-land or the use of a brackish well; perhaps the desire to get such a one's horse or camel into his own possession—all objects which imply little animosity, and, if not attained in the campaign, can easily be made up for in other ways, nor entail the bitterness and cruelty that attend or follow civil and religious strife.

In all these respects it is fully evident to such as have studied the earlier records of this Peninsula, that the Bedouins have gained or lost little for some two thousand years. But what I wish my readers to remember is, that these wanderers must not be taken for a true sample of the Arab race, or for its genuine type; they are only a degenerate branch of that great tree, not its root or main stock. In a word, they are a pastoral population grown out of and around the fixed nation, of which we shall soon see more, and condemned to savage life, with all its concomitants of ignorance and vice, by the circumstances of their condition, or fostered into insolence and open rapine by the weakness and negligence of those who should have kept them within due limits.

But to understand this thoroughly, it is important to state in a few words what is the groundwork of the whole Arab frame

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of society and nationality; and I trust that my reader will not hold ill spent a few minutes given to the consideration of the topic; correct views on this point will render much more intelligible, and thereby more profitable, the perusal not only of the present narrative, but of many others also relating more or less to this people and country. This matter once sufficiently explained, we can continue on our way with much fewer digressions; indeed, the whole of the ground hitherto gone over may be looked on rather as a sort of introduction to the journey than as the journey itself, which, strictly speaking, commences at the Djowf, and not before.

Arab nationality—thus far like that of the historical Jew or the Highlander—is and always has been from the very earliest times based on the divisions of families and clans, tribes as they are often called; nor is the name misapplied if taken in its original sense of hereditary alliance, without the additional idea of barbarism and unsettled life often annexed to it in its modern application. These tribes, or clans, were soon, by the nature of the land itself, divided each and every one into two branches, correlative, indeed, but of unequal size and importance. The greater section remained as townsmen or peasants in the districts best susceptible of culture and permanent occupation, where they still kept up much of their original clannish denominations and forms, though often blended, and even at times obliterated by the fusion inseparable from civil and social organization. The other and lesser portion devoted themselves to a pastoral life, for which the desert, that is, about a third in extent of the Arabian Peninsula, affords ample scope. They, too, retained their original clannish and family demarcations, but unsoftened by civilization and unblended by the links of close-drawn society; so that in this point, and indeed in this alone, they have continued to be the faithful depositaries of primeval Arab tradition, and constitute a sort of standard rule for the whole nation. Hence, when genealogical doubts and questions of descent arise, as they often do, among the fixed inhabitants—or "dwellers in brick," to give citizens and villagers their collective Arab denomination—recourse is often had to the neighbouring Bedouins for a decision unattainable in the complicated records of town life; whereas the living

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Gwillym of the desert can readily explain every quartering and surcharging in every scutcheon of Arab nobility. But in all other respects, in religion, arts, science, and civilization, these heralds of the wilds have naturally enough retrograded rather than advanced one step beyond their first condition. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, with the desert for their only teacher, and camels and ostriches for fellow-scholars? Hence, while the fixed population have added to their first stock-in-hand of knowledge and arts many of the new acquirements and ameliorations which the progressive law of the human mind, when under favourable circumstances, never fails to bring among men, the Bedouins have, on the other hand, receded to the utmost limit of barbarism possible among Arabs, and have at last become such as we now see them; till they bear the same relation to the rest of their fellow-countrymen that a wild crab offshoot below does to the thriving and fruit-laden branches above.

Herdsmen by profession, it is from their herds that the Bedouins derive their principal means of subsistence. Their trade is in camels, and in sheep when they have them, besides a little in the horse-dealing line, especially to the north. In requital for flesh and wool, they obtain the scanty articles of dress, food, and furniture which their mode of life requires: these are not multifarious; in fact, a better exemplification of the poet's "man wants but little here below," can hardly be imagined. The chase of gazelles and ostriches furnishes them with supplementary occupation and profit, while the desert itself, untilled by hand of man, offers to their vagabond idleness the scanty harvests described a little further back. Plunder, too, whether of travellers or of villagers, makes another subsidiary resource, but this is a luxury rarely obtainable within the Arab territory itself, though of frequent occurrence in the dominions of Constantinopolitan allegiance.

One word more, and I have done with our nomade friends. Their hospitality, of which we have just seen a specimen, nay, their generosity, have been a favourite theme much dilated on and oft repeated. Nor do I wish to deprive them of all credit for these good qualities, though here also they are really, no less than in other respects, far inferior to the mass of their more

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civilized countrymen. But their open-handedness often springs more from the childish levity of the savage than from true and praiseworthy liberality of character. Like an infant that stretches out its small hands and opens its little mouth for whatever comes within its reach, be it a guinea or a cherry, and with almost equal readiness lets its new acquisition drop no sooner than grasped, the Bedouin is at once rapacious and profuse, coveting all he sees, without much distinction of its worth, and lightly parting with what he has already appropriated, from very incapacity to estimate or appreciate its value. To give, to beg, or to plunder are for him correlative acts, all arising in the main from the same immense ignorance of what property really is, and what its importance; and thus he is often scarce more entitled to commendation for the one act than liable to serious blame for the other; in a word, he knows no better. Besides, he has in general but little to offer, and for that very little he not unfrequently promises himself an ample retribution, by plundering his last-night's guest when a few hours distant on his morning journey. Still, a certain kindness of feeling towards strangers, the same which forms a very prominent feature in the Arab family likeness, is not wholly extinct in the breast of this half-savage; and what he offers in the way of hospitality is accompanied by a heartiness of welcome and an uncouth attempt to please, which certainly has its merit, and often obtains encomiums very agreeable to Bedouin ears. But he is at best an ill-educated child, whose natural good qualities have remained undeveloped or half stifled by bad treatment and extreme neglect.

From all this my readers may draw, if they choose, two conclusions, general indeed, yet seldom misapplied. The first, that the respective prosperity and importance of the dwellers in tents and the dwellers in brick are in a nearly exact but an inverse proportion; the second, that when these same Bedouins are by wise regulations and an energetic government kept within the limits of their proper sphere, simple shepherds and herdsmen, without being allowed to acquire a degree of strength and influence to which they have no right, and of which they are sure to make a bad use, it is the better for all parties.

Want of attention, perhaps of knowledge, on these points has,

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it seems, given rise to many inexact theories and statements, embodied in books or current in men's mouths, regarding the Arab nation, and I have therefore thought it not amiss to take occasion from the Sherarat, and to attempt giving a truer view of the matter. It may serve, at least I hope it will, as a corrective to the romances of many authors, especially French, on the score of the desert and its indwellers. Besides, facts like these have their practical bearing, and their knowledge may be useful in more than one way to those who have to deal with Arabs collectively or even individually. Treating with a people one does not understand is like reading a book in an unknown language, and can only give rise to erroneous ideas and sometimes to erroneous doings.

Of course my comrade and myself were not long in perceiving that whatever might be the available object or result intended by our journey, we could not expect to find it among the unsettled clans. Hence, we looked forward with eagerness to the inhabited districts further on, described to us by the Bedouins with all the emphasis and exaggeration of a cottager from the Isle of Man painting London or Liverpool after a first visit thither. But even after mentally making all suitable deductions from these highly coloured recitals, we yet concluded that what lay before us must anyhow be very different both in land and inhabitants from the regions we had hitherto traversed between Gaza and the Djowf, and so indeed we found it on our arrival at the latter locality four days later.

On the 27th of the month we passed with some difficulty a series of abrupt sand-hills that close in the direct course of Wadi Sirḥan. Here, for the first time, we saw the Ghaḍa, a shrub peculiar, I believe, to the Arabian Peninsula, and often alluded to by its poets. It is of the genus Euphorbia, with a woody stem, often five or six feet in height, and innumerable round green twigs, very slender and flexible, forming a large feathery tuft, not ungraceful to the eye, while it affords some kind of shelter to the traveller and food to his camels. These last are passionately fond of Ghaḍa, and will continually turn right out of their way, in spite of blows and kicks, to crop a mouthful of it, and then swing back their long necks into the former direction, ready to repeat the same manœuvre at the next bush

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as though they had never received a beating for their past voracity.

I have, while in England, heard and read more than once of the "docile camel." If "docile" means stupid, well and good; in such a case the camel is the very model of docility. But if the epithet is intended to designate an animal that takes an interest in its rider so far as a beast can, that in some way understands his intentions or shares them in a subordinate fashion, that obeys from a sort of submissive or half fellow-feeling with his master, like the horse and elephant, then I say that the camel is by no means docile, very much the contrary; he takes no heed of his rider, pays no attention whether he be on his back or not, walks straight on when once set a going, merely because he is too stupid to turn aside; and then, should some tempting thorn or green branch allure him out of the path, continues to walk on in this new direction simply because he is too dull to turn back into the right road. His only care is to cross as much pasture as he conveniently can while pacing mechanically onwards; and for effecting this his long flexible neck sets him at great advantage, and a hard blow or a downright kick alone has any influence on him whether to direct or impel. He will never attempt to throw you off his back, such a trick being far beyond his limited comprehension; but if you fall off, he will never dream of stopping for you, and walks on just the same, grazing while he goes, without knowing or caring an atom what has become of you. If turned loose, it is a thousand to one that he will never find his way back to his accustomed home or pasture, and the first comer who picks him up will have no particular shyness to get over; Jack or Tom are all the same to him, and the loss of his old master and of his former cameline companions gives him no regret and occasions no endeavour to find them again. One only symptom will he give that he is aware of his rider, and that is when the latter is about to mount him, for on such an occasion, instead of addressing him in the style of old Balaam's more intelligent beast, "Am not I thy camel upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day?" he will bend back his long snaky neck towards his master, open his enormous jaws to bite if he dared, and roar out a tremendous sort of groan, as if to complain of some entirely

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new and unparalleled injustice about to be done him. In a word, he is from first to last an undomesticated and savage animal, rendered serviceable by stupidity alone, without much skill on his master's part or any co-operation on his own, save that of an extreme passiveness. Neither attachment nor even habit impress him; never tame, though not wide awake enough to be exactly wild.

One passion alone he possesses, namely revenge, of which he furnishes many a hideous example, while in carrying it out he shows an unexpected degree of far-thoughted malice, united meanwhile with all the cold stupidity of his usual character. One instance of this I well remember; it occurred hard by a small town in the plain of Ba'albec, where I was at the time residing. A lad of about fourteen had conducted a large camel, laden with wood, from that very village to another at half an hour's distance or so. As the animal loitered or turned out of the way, its conductor struck it repeatedly, and harder than it seems to have thought he had a right to do. But not finding the occasion favourable for taking immediate quits, it "bode its time;" nor was that time long in coming. A few days later the same lad had to reconduct the beast, but unladen, to his own village. When they were about half way on the road, and at some distance from any habitation, the camel suddenly stopped, looked deliberately round in every direction to assure itself that no one was within sight, and, finding the road far and near clear of passers-by, made a step forward, seized the unlucky boy's head in its monstrous mouth, and lifting him up in the air flung him down again on the earth with the upper part of his skull completely torn off, and his brains scattered on the ground. Having thus satisfied its revenge, the brute quietly resumed its pace towards the village as though nothing were the matter, till some men who had observed the whole, though unfortunately at too great a distance to be able to afford timely help, came up and killed it.

Indeed, so marked is this unamiable propensity, that some philosophers, doubtless of Professor Görres' school, have ascribed the revengeful character of the Arabs to the great share which the flesh and milk of the camel have in their sustenance, and which are supposed to communicate to those who partake of

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them over-largely the moral or immoral qualities of the animal to which they belonged. I do not feel myself capable of pronouncing an opinion on so intricate a question; but thus much I can say, that the camel and his Bedouin master do afford so many and such obvious points of resemblance, that I did not think an Arab of Shomer far in the wrong when I once of a time heard him say, "God created the Bedouin for the camel, and the camel for the Bedouin." Pity that the bard of Twickenham was not by to hear; it might have afforded his "Essay on Man" a somewhat more dignified illustration of the creational scheme than the "pampered goose." But let us now drive our camels past the Ghaḍa bushes, where riders and ridden have been alike diverging, and resume our onward way.

After passing the sand-hills lately mentioned, we left the direct line of the valley, and entered on a new scene. The country was still open and desert, but much modified in aspect from the black uplands that had preceded Wadi Sirḥan. The plain, though strewn with gravel, was of a yellowish hue, nor was its surface so absolutely and hopelessly barren; while on the left a long range of abrupt hills, the Djebal-el-Djowf, or "mountains of Djowf," extended far into the distance. Our course lay in a kind of groove, a side embranchment of Sirḥan, and leading almost due south. A little after noon we came upon a large hollow, where, amid two hundred Sherarat tents at the least, (myself and my companion counted them till we grew tired,) lay the waters of Magooa', a collection of deep and perennial wells, whose water would not be altogether bad, were dirt and camels kept a little further from the rim. The Bedouin encampment belonged to Sa'eed, chief of the 'Azzam branch of the Sherarat tribe, and for some time past amenable to the authority of Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed.

Here we were obliged to pass the rest of that day and the following also. For Salem, who could not enter the Djowf along with us in person, on account of a murder there committed by him at a previous date, was here compelled to stop and look out for us a companion capable of conducting us safe within the limits of that territory, and who once there might receive from us a written attestation of our having duly reached our journey's end. This paper, duly signed and sealed, was to be

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delivered to Salem, who without it could not receive his stipulated hire, which at the outset of the journey had been deposited in the hands of a worthy town-magistrate of Ma'ān, Ibraheem by name. From him our Ḥoweytat guide was to receive his guerdon on presenting, by way of letter of credit, the document just alluded to, in which we were to declare that we had arrived in due form and comfort at our journey's end, without having had any subject of complaint or dissatisfaction with our escort.

It is always prudent in him whoever desires to travel with tolerable security in these deserts, to take some similar measure, and to render those he journeys with responsible to those he leaves behind him, and, if possible, to those also who lie before. Thus, for instance, besides precautions like that just described, it is highly desirable and advantageous to be able to say that one bears with one letters of importance to such or such a governor, and to show a scrap of folded and sealed paper bearing his address, little matters what may be within, since not one Bedouin among fifty thousand can read a syllable. Such documents we took good care to provide ourselves with from stage to stage of our journey, and to this, under Providence, we owed in great measure our safe return at last from a land where it is hard to enter, but often yet harder to return. But at any rate let no one who has to do with Bedouins pay their services beforehand; by so doing he would be much less likely to secure their fidelity for wages received, than to excite their cupidity for wealth supposed to remain in store. For the same reason it is moreover advisable to drive as hard a bargain with them as possible, not perhaps for the sake of sparing a piastre or two, but in order to impress them with the idea that one has very little cash in hand, and cannot afford to be lavish of it. Better by far to appear in need of their liberality than to make them debtors to your own, for a debtor's person is too valuable to be tampered with, whereas the position of a creditor is by no means equally safe among men whose gratitude and high feeling are much less sure in the reckoning than rapacity and treachery. The civilized man is their prey, and they will not fail to treat him for such if they have reason to think him worth preying on. Besides, to show oneself careless about

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expenditure is to mark oneself a European, the last thing a prudent man should do in Arabia; whereas to appear stingy is an excellent passport for being held a native of Damascus, Cairo, or Bagdad. This may be a hint for travellers, whether in the Arabian desert, or among analogous lands and people.

After much search and many proffers canvassed and rejected, Salem ended by finding a good-natured but somewhat timid individual, Suleyman-el-'Azzamee, who undertook our guidance to the Djowf. Meanwhile Sey'eed and his relations, desirous to secure from us a favourable report of their conduct on our coming before the governor of that district, treated us fairly well; meat and milk, dates and samḥ, came before us in succession, and we passed our day not uncomfortably on the whole, chatting in the tents, or strolling about the sand-hills round the hollow, in spite of the overpowering heat, enough to have made a Bengalee complain, and a Madrassee pronounce it utterly intolerable.

Early on the 29th of the month we were again on our way in company of Suleyman, and several other individuals of the tribe, who had business with Ḥamood, the vicegerent of Djowf; Salem, with 'Alee and Djordee, remained behind in the encampment. Before us lay an upland and barren tract, opening out to the north through the gaps of Djebal-el-Djowf, and another similar range bordering on the great Syro-Arabic waste, whose restless tenants, the 'Anezeh Bedouins of clan Bishr, often infest the intervening space. Here we sighted a large troop of ostriches; no bird on earth is more timid or more difficult of approach. When we saw them far ahead running in a long line one after the other as though their very lives depended on it, we almost took them for a string of scared camels. The Sherarat hunt them, as their plumage is eagerly bought up on the frontiers to be resold in Egypt or Syria, whence it often passes on to Europe. But their greatest enemies are the Ṣolibah Bedouins, of whom more hereafter.

No water is to be found in this steppe. We journeyed on all the long summer day, and only halted for an hour at sunset to prepare a cinder-seasoned meal; then remounted, and passed close under the south-eastern spur of Djebal-el-Djowf, till after midnight a short halt afforded us a little rest and sleep.

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Mine was, however, somewhat disturbed by a scorpion bite: not so serious an accident, indeed, as it sounds, considering the genus of the aggressor, but painful enough, though soon passing off. These desert scorpions are curious little creatures, about a fourth of an inch in length, and, apparently, all claws and tail, of a deep reddish brown colour, and very active. They abound throughout the sandy soil. In the daytime they wisely keep out of the way, but at night come out to take the cooler air. Their sting is exactly like the smart of a white-hot iron point firmly pressed on the skin, and when I felt my forehead thus assaulted, I jumped up exceedingly quick, anticipating twenty-four hours of suffering, the usual period allotted, at least in popular credence, to the duration of scorpion torture; but I was agreeably disappointed, for the pain did not last above an hour, was accompanied by a little swelling, and then went entirely off, hardly leaving any perceptible mark.

We remounted by the light of the morning star, anxious to enter the Djowf before the intense heat of noon should come on; but we had yet a long way to go, and our track followed endless windings among low hills and basaltic ledges, without any symptom of approach to cultivated regions. At last the slopes grew greener, and a small knot of houses with traces of tillage close by appeared. It was the little village of Djoon, the most westerly appendage of Djowf itself. I counted between twenty and thirty houses. We next entered a long and narrow pass, whose precipitous banks shut in the view on either side. Suddenly several horsemen appeared on the opposite cliff; and one of them, a handsome youth, with long curling hair, well armed and well mounted (we shall make his more special acquaintance in the next chapter), called out to our guide to halt, and answer in his own behalf and ours. This Suleyman did, not without those marks of timidity in his voice and gesture which a Bedouin seldom fails to show on his approach to a town, for when once in it he is apt to sneak about much like a dog who has just received a beating for theft. On his answer, delivered in a most submissive tone, the horseman held a brief consultation, and we then saw two of them turn their horses' heads, and gallop off in the direction of the Djowf, while our original interlocutor called out to Suleyman, "All right, go on,

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and fear nothing," and then disappeared after the rest of the band behind the verge of the upland.

We had yet to drag on for an hour of tedious march; my camel fairly broke down, and fell again and again; his bad example was followed by the coffee-laden beast; the heat was terrible in these gorges, and noon was approaching. At last we cleared the pass, but found the onward prospect still shut out by an intervening mass of rocks. The water in our skins was spent, and we had eaten nothing that morning. When shall we get in sight of the Djowf? or has it flown away from before us? While thus wearily labouring on our way, we turned a huge pile of crags, and a new and beautiful scene burst upon our view.

But that view, and what followed on this our first transition from desert to inhabited Arabia, deserves a separate chapter.

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CHAPTER II

The Djowf

Thus far into the bowels of the land
Have we marched on without impediment.
Shakespeare

VIEW OF DJOWF FROM THE NORTH — MEETING OF GHĀFIL AND ḌĀFEE — GHĀFIL'S HOUSE; THE ḴH'HĀWAH — FORMALITIES OF SOCIETY — COFFEE MAKING — DATES — GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DJOWF — ITS HOUSES, WAR-TOWERS, GARDENS, AND PALM-GROVES — CLIMATE — POPULATION — OTHER VILLAGES — PAST HISTORY; WAHHABEE CONQUEST, SUBSEQUENT ANARCHY — INTERVENTION OF 'ABD-ALLAH-EBN-RASHEED — THE RU'ALA — INVASION OF ṬELĀL; HE CONQUERS THE DJOWF AND REDUCES IT TO A PROVINCE — ḤAMOOD MADE GOVERNOR — PHYSICAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE INHABITANTS — RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE OF THE ARABS — POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE WITH THE ENGLISH — COMMERCE AND PROGRESS — OUR NEW LODGINGS — DAILY LIFE — A DJOWF SUPPER — ACCUSATION BROUGHT AGAINST US — VISIT TO THE CASTLE — ITS ARCHITECTURE — TOWER OF MARID — ḤAMOOD; HIS ḴH'HĀWAH, HIS SHOMER RETINUE — ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE — MOSQUE — ANNOYANCES EXPERIENCED — SOCIETY IN DJOWF — ARRIVAL OF THE 'AZZAM DEPUTATION; WE AGREE TO ACCOMPANY THEM TO ḤĀ'YEL — OUR NEW GUIDE — DEPARTURE FROM DJOWF — ROUTE SOUTHWARDS — BE'ER SHEḴEEḴ, ITS CONSTRUCTION — REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF ARABIA.

A BROAD deep valley, descending ledge after ledge till its innermost depths are hidden from sight amid far-reaching shelves of reddish rock, below everywhere studded with tufts of palm-groves and clustering fruit-trees in dark green patches down to the furthest end of its windings; a large brown mass of irregular masonry crowning a central hill; beyond a tall and solitary tower overlooking the opposite bank of the hollow, and further down small round turrets and flat house-tops half buried amid the garden foliage, the whole plunged in a perpendicular flood of light and heat; such was the first aspect of the Djowf as we now approached it from the west. It was a lovely scene, and seemed yet more so to our eyes weary of the long desolation through which we had with hardly an exception journeyed day after day since our last farewell glimpse of Gaza and Palestine up

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to the first entrance on inhabited Arabia. "Like the Paradise of eternity, none can enter it till after having previously passed over hell-bridge," says an Arab poet, describing some similar locality in Algerian lands.

Reanimated by the view, we pushed on our jaded beasts, and were already descending the first craggy slope of the valley, when two horsemen, well dressed and fully armed after the fashion of these parts, came up toward us from the town, and at once saluted us with a loud and hearty "Marḥaba," or "welcome;" and without further preface they added, "alight and eat," giving themselves the example of the former by descending briskly from their light-limbed horses, and untying a large leather bag full of excellent dates, and a water-skin, filled from the running spring; then spreading out these most opportune refreshments on the rock, and adding, "we were sure that you must be hungry and thirsty, so we have come ready provided," they invited us once more to sit down and begin.

Hungry and thirsty we indeed were; the dates were those of Djowf, the choicest in their kind to be met with in northern Arabia, the water was freshly drawn, cool and clear, no slight recommendations after the ammoniacal wells of Magowa' and Oweysiṭ, so that altogether we thought it unnecessary to make our new friends repeat their invitation, and without delay set ourselves to enjoy the present good, leaving the future with all its cares to Providence and the course of events. Meanwhile I took the occasion of studying more minutely the outward man of our benefactors.

The elder of the cavaliers was a man apparently of about forty years of age, tall, well-made, dark-complexioned, and with a look that inspired some mistrust, while it denoted much intelligence and more habitual haughtiness. He was handsomely dressed for an Arab, wearing a red cloth vest with large hanging sleeves over his long white shirt, with a silk handkerchief, striped red and yellow, on his head, and a silver-hilted sword at his side. In short, all about him denoted a person of some wealth and importance. This was Ghāfil-el-Ḥaboob, the chief of the most important and the most turbulent family of the Djowf, Beyt-Ḥaboob, who were not long since the rulers of

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the town, but are now, like all the rest of their countrymen, humble subjects to Ḥamood, vicegerent of Ṭelāl, the prince of Djebel Shomer.

His companion, Ḍāfee by name, seemed younger in years and slenderer of make; he was less richly dressed, though carrying, like Ghāfil, the silver-hilted sword common in Arabia to all men of good birth and circumstances; his family name was also Ḥaboob, but his features bespoke a much milder and opener character than that of the chief, his cousin at the fourth or fifth remove.

After taking our meal, we remained awhile where we were in question and answer. Having been previously informed that the governor Ḥamood resided in the town itself, we suggested to Ghāfil whether it might not be suitable for us to pay that important personage the compliment of a first visit at our very entrance. But the chief had several reasons, which my readers will afterwards learn, for not desiring our so doing. Accordingly he answered that we were his personal guests, and that he himself had in consequence the right to our first reception; that as for Ḥamood, we should visit him a little later, and in his own company; that it would be time enough for such ceremonies after a day or two, and that in the meanwhile he was himself a sufficient guarantee of the governor's good will.

But on this Ḍāfee put in his claim to be our host, saying that his house was the nearer at hand; that he also had come in person to meet us; and that in consequence he had as good a right as Ghāfil to have us for his guests. However, he was in his turn obliged to yield to the superior authority of his kinsman. We then all rode on slowly together, and when we were on the point of reaching the lower level of the valley, and had already begun to enter amid the deep shadows of the palm-groves, Ḍāfee tendered his apologies for letting us thus pass by his domicile without partaking its hospitality; and having added an invitation for the nearest day, he turned aside between the high garden walls to his abode, where we will leave him for the present. But on parting he gave a look of much meaning, first at Ghāfil, and then at us, the import of which we did not as yet fully understand.

Meanwhile we passed on in the company of our new host, who

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continued all the way his welcomes and protestations of readiness to render us every imaginable service, and leaving a little on our right the castle hill and tower, threaded between grove after grove, and garden after garden, till a high gateway gave us admittance to a cluster of houses around an open space, where seats of beaten earth and stone bordering the walls here and there formed a sort of Arab antechamber or waiting-room for visitors not yet received within the interior precincts, and thus bespoke the importance of the neighbouring house, and consequently of its owner.

Here Ghāfil halted before a portal high enough to admit a camel and rider, and, while we modestly dismounted to await further orders, entered alone the dwelling to see if all had been duly got ready for our reception, and then quickly returned, and invited us to follow him indoors.

We traversed a second entrance, and now found ourselves in a small courtyard, three sides of which were formed by different apartments; the fourth consisted of a stable for horses and camels. In front rose a high wall, with several small windows pierced in it (no glass, of course, in this warm climate) close under the roof, and one large door in the centre. This belonged to the Ḳ'hāwah, or G'hāwah, as they here call it, that is, the coffee-room, or reception-room, if you will; inasmuch as ladies never honour its precincts, I cannot suitably dignify it with the title of drawing-room. The description of one such apartment may suffice, with little variation, for all the Ḳ'hāwahs of Arabia; it is an indispensable feature in every decent house throughout the Peninsula from end to end, and offers everywhere very little variation, save that of larger or smaller, better or worse furnished, according to the circumstances of its owner. For this reason I shall now permit myself some minuteness of detail in Ghāfil's mansion; it may stand sample for thousands of others.

The Ḳ'hāwah was a large oblong hall, about twenty feet in height, fifty in length, and sixteen, or thereabouts, in breadth; the walls were coloured in a rudely decorative manner with brown and white wash, and sunk here and there into small triangular recesses, destined to the reception of books, though of these Ghāfil at least had no over-abundance, lamps, and

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other such like objects. The roof of timber, and flat; the floor was strewed with fine clean sand, and garnished all round alongside of the walls with long strips of carpet, upon which cushions, covered with faded silk, were disposed at suitable intervals. In poorer houses felt rugs usually take the place of carpets. In one corner, namely, that furthest removed from the door, stood a small fireplace, or, to speak more exactly, furnace, formed of a large square block of granite, or some other hard stone, about twenty inches each way; this is hollowed inwardly into a deep funnel, open above, and communicating below with a small horizontal tube or pipe-hole, through which the air passes, bellows-driven, to the lighted charcoal piled up on a grating about half-way inside the cone. In this manner the fuel is soon brought to a white heat, and the water in the coffee-pot placed upon the funnel's mouth is readily brought to boil. The system of coffee furnaces is universal in Djowf and Djebel Shomer, but in Nejed itself, and indeed in whatever other yet more distant regions of Arabia I visited to the south and east, the furnace is replaced by an open fireplace hollowed in the ground floor, with a raised stone border, and dog-irons for the fuel, and so forth, just like what may be yet seen in Spain, and even in some old English manor-houses. This diversity of arrangement, so far as Arabia is concerned, is due to the greater abundance of fire-wood in the south, whereby the inhabitants are enabled to light up on a larger scale; whereas throughout the Djowf and Djebel Shomer wood is very scarce, and the only fuel at hand is bad charcoal, often brought from a considerable distance, and carefully husbanded.

This corner of the Ḳ'hāwah is also the place of distinction, whence honour and coffee radiate by progressive degrees round the apartment, and hereabouts accordingly sits the master of the house himself, or the guests whom he more especially delighteth to honour.

On the broad edge of the furnace or fireplace, as the case may be, stands an ostentatious range of copper coffee-pots, varying in size and form. Here in the Djowf their make resembles that in vogue at Damascus; but in Nejed and the eastern districts they are of a different and much more orna-

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mental fashioning, very tall and slender, with several ornamental circles and mouldings in elegant relief, besides boasting long beak-shaped spouts and high steeples for covers. The number of these utensils is often ridiculously great. I have seen a dozen at a time in a row by one fireside, though coffee-making requires, in fact, only three at most. Here in the Djowf five or six are considered to be the thing; for the south this number must be doubled; all this to indicate the riches and munificence of their owner, by implying the frequency of his guests and the large amount of coffee that he is in consequence obliged to have made for them.

Behind this stove sits, at least in wealthy houses, a black slave, whose name is generally a diminutive, in token of familiarity or affection; in the present case it was Soweylim, the diminutive of Sālem. His occupation is to make and pour out the coffee; where there is no slave in the family, the master of the premises himself, or perhaps one of his sons, performs that hospitable duty; rather a tedious one, as we shall soon see.

Of slaves, and of their condition in central Arabia, I shall give a fuller account when we arrive at the central provinces, where these gentlemen are much more numerous than in the Djowf.

We enter. On passing the threshold it is proper to say, "Bismillah," *i.e.*, "in the name of God;" not to do so would be looked on as a bad augury alike for him who enters and for those within. The visitor next advances in silence, till on coming about half-way across the room, he gives to all present, but looking specially at the master of the house, the customary "Es-salamu 'aleykum," or "Peace be with you," literally, "on you." All this while every one else in the room has kept his place, motionless, and without saying a word. But on receiving the salaam of etiquette, the master of the house rises, and if a strict Wahhābee, or at any rate desirous of seeming such, replies with the full-length traditionary formula, "W' 'aleykumu-s-salāmu, w'rahmat' Ullāhi w'barakátuh," which is, as every one knows, "And with (or, on) you be peace, and the mercy of God, and his blessings." But should he happen to be of anti-Wahhābee tendencies, the odds are that he will say "Marḥaba," or "Ahlan w' sahlan," *i.e.*, "welcome," or "worthy, and plea-

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surable," or the like; for of such phrases there is an infinite, but elegant variety. All present follow the example thus given, by rising and saluting. The guest then goes up to the master of the house, who has also made a step or two forwards, and places his open hand in the palm of his host's, but without grasping or shaking, which would hardly pass for decorous, and at the same time each repeats once more his greeting, followed by the set phrases of polite enquiry, "How are you?" "How goes the world with you?" and so forth, all in a tone of great interest, and to be gone over three or four times, till one or other has the discretion to say "El ḥamdu l'illāh," "Praise be to God," or, in equivalent value, "all right," and this is a signal for a seasonable diversion to the ceremonious interrogatory.

The guest then, after a little contest of courtesy, takes his seat in the honoured post by the fireplace, after an apologetical salutation to the black slave on the one side, and to his nearest neighbour on the other. The best cushions and newest-looking carpets have been of course prepared for his honoured weight. Shoes or sandals, for in truth the latter alone are used in Arabia, are slipped off on the sand just before reaching the carpet, and there they remain on the floor close by. But the riding stick or wand, the inseparable companion of every true Arab, whether Bedouin or townsman, rich or poor, gentle or simple, is to be retained in the hand, and will serve for playing with during the pauses of conversation, like the fan of our great-grandmothers in their days of conquest.

Without delay Soweylim begins his preparations for coffee. These open by about five minutes of blowing with the bellows and arranging the charcoal till a sufficient heat has been produced. Next he places the largest of the coffee-pots, a huge machine, and about two-thirds full of clear water, close by the edge of the glowing coal-pit, that its contents may become gradually warm while other operations are in progress. He then takes a dirty knotted rag out of a niche in the wall close by, and having untied it, empties out of it three or four handfuls of unroasted coffee, the which he places on a little trencher of platted grass, and picks carefully out any blackened grains, or other non-homologous substances, commonly to be found intermixed with

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the berries when purchased in gross; then, after much cleansing and shaking, he pours the grain so cleansed into a large open iron ladle, and places it over the mouth of the funnel, at the same time blowing the bellows and stirring the grains gently round and round till they crackle, redden, and smoke a little, but carefully withdrawing them from the heat long before they turn black or charred, after the erroneous fashion of Turkey and Europe; after which he puts them to cool a moment on the grass platter. He then sets the warm water in the large coffee-pot over the fire aperture, that it may be ready boiling at the right moment, and draws in close between his own trouserless legs a large stone mortar, with a narrow pit in the middle, just enough to admit the black stone pestle of a foot long and an inch and half thick, which he now takes in hand. Next, pouring the half-roasted berries into the mortar, he proceeds to pound them, striking right into the narrow hollow with wonderful dexterity, nor ever missing his blow till the beans are smashed, but not reduced into powder. He then scoops them out, now reduced to a sort of coarse reddish grit, very unlike the fine charcoal dust which passes in some countries for coffee, and out of which every particle of real aroma has long since been burnt or ground. After all these operations, each performed with as intense a seriousness and deliberate nicety as if the welfare of the entire Djowf depended on it, he takes a smaller coffee-pot in hand, fills it more than half with hot water from the larger vessel, and then shaking the pounded coffee into it, sets it on the fire to boil, occasionally stirring it with a small stick as the water rises to check the ebullition and prevent overflowing. Nor is the boiling stage to be long or vehement; on the contrary, it is and should be as light as possible. In the interim he takes out of another rag-knot a few aromatic seeds called heyl, an Indian product, but of whose scientific name I regret to be wholly ignorant, or a little saffron, and after slightly pounding these ingredients, throws them into the simmering coffee to improve its flavour, for such an additional spicing is held indispensable in Arabia, though often omitted elsewhere in the East. Sugar, I may say, would be a totally unheard-of profanation. Last of all, he strains off the liquor through some fibres of the inner palm-bark placed for that purpose in the

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jug-spout, and gets ready the tray of delicate parti-coloured grass, and the small coffee cups ready for pouring out. All these preliminaries have taken up a good half-hour.

Meantime we have become engaged in active conversation with our host and his friends. But our Sherarat guide, Suleyman, like a true Bedouin, feels too awkward when among townsfolk to venture on the upper places, though repeatedly invited, and accordingly has squatted down on the sand near the entrance. Many of Ghāfil's relations are present; their silver-decorated swords proclaim the importance of the family. Others, too, have come to receive us, for our arrival, announced beforehand by those we had met at the entrance pass, is a sort of event in the town; the dress of some betokens poverty, others are better clad, but all have a very polite and decorous manner. Many a question is asked about our native land and town, that is to say, Syria and Damascus, conformably to the disguise already adopted, and which it was highly important to keep well up; then follow enquiries regarding our journey, our business, what we have brought with us, about our medicines, our goods and wares, &c., &c. From the very first it is easy for us to perceive that purchasers and patients are likely to abound. For my part, being still harassed by my intermittent fever, and very tired, I gave my comrade a hint to shirk the Esculapian topic, and to put the mercantile interest as much as possible in the foreground. Very few travelling merchants, if any, visit the Djowf at this time of year, for one must be mad, or next door to it, to rush into the vast desert around during the heats of June and July; I for one have certainly no intention of doing it again. Hence we had small danger of competitors, and found the market almost at our absolute disposal.

But before a quarter of an hour has passed, and while blacky is still roasting or pounding his coffee, a tall thin lad, Ghāfil's eldest son, appears, charged with a large circular dish, grass-platted like the rest, and throws it with a graceful jerk on the sandy floor close before us. He then produces a large wooden bowl full of dates, bearing in the midst of the heap a cup full of melted butter; all this he places on the circular mat, and says, "Semmoo," literally, "pronounce the Name,"

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of God, understood; this means, "set to work at it." Hereon the master of the house quits his place by the fireside and seats himself on the sand opposite to us; we draw nearer to the dish, and four or five others, after some respectful coyness, join the circle. Every one then picks out a date or two from the juicy half-amalgamated mass, dips them into the butter, and thus goes on eating till he has had enough, when he rises and washes his hands.

By this time the coffee is ready, and Soweylim begins his round, the coffee-pot in one hand, the tray and cups on the other. The first pouring out he must in etiquette drink himself, by way of a practical assurance that there is no "death in the pot;" the guests are next served, beginning with those next the honourable fire-side; the master of the house receives his cup last of all. To refuse would be a positive and unpardonable insult; but one has not much to swallow at a time, for the coffee-cups, or finjans, are about the size of a large egg-shell at most, and are never more than half filled. This is considered essential to good breeding, and a brimmer would here imply exactly the reverse of what it does in Europe; why it should be so I hardly know, unless perhaps the rareness of cup-stands or "zarfs" (see Lane's Modern Egyptians, Chapter V) in Arabia, though these implements are universal in Egypt and Syria, might render an over-full cup inconveniently hot for the fingers that must grasp it without medium. Be that as it may, "fill the cup for your enemy" is an adage common to all, Bedouins or townsmen, throughout the Peninsula. The beverage itself is singularly aromatic and refreshing, a real tonic, and utterly different from the black mud sucked by the Osmanli, or the watery roast-bean preparations of France. When the slave or freeman, according to circumstances, presents you with a cup, he never fails to accompany it with a "Semm'," "say the name of God," nor must you take it without answering "bismillah."

When all have been thus served, a second round is poured out, but in inverse order, for the host this time drinks first, and the guests last. On special occasions, a first reception, for instance, the ruddy liquor is a third time handed round; nay, a fourth cup is sometimes added. But all these put

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together do not come up to one-fourth of what a European imbibes in a single draught at breakfast.

Ghāfil would have greatly wished us to set up shop and medicine in his own house, nor without reason, for his domestic stock of coffee was almost at an end, and he trusted, under cover of hospitality, to drive an advantageous bargain with us for that which we had brought. But on our part, my comrade and myself were very desirous of finding means for being sometimes alone together; we had much to talk over and consult about, and that of a nature not always exactly fitted for our friend's hearing; besides, I had my journal to write up, and for this and such like matters we had not as yet enjoyed a moment free from prying observation from the moment of our leaving Ma'ān on the 16th up to this the 30th of June. Nor could we, while remaining as mere guests under another man's roof, obtain the independent position so desirable for rightly studying the land and its inhabitants. We therefore declined the chief's repeated proffer, and insisted, under various decent pretexts, on the necessity of a separate lodging-place.

With this Ghāfil was at last obliged to comply, and promised us that we should next day be installed in a convenient and central dwelling. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to repose, and it was near sunset when our host invited us to visit his gardens in the cool of the evening. I will take the opportunity of leading my readers over the whole of the Djowf, as a general view will help better to understand what follows in the narrative, besides offering much that will be in part new, I should fancy, to the greater number.

This province is a sort of oasis, a large oval depression of sixty or seventy miles long, by ten or twelve broad, lying between the northern desert that separates it from Syria and Euphrates, and the southern Nefood, or sandy waste, and interposed between it and the nearest mountains of the central Arabian plateau, where it first rises at Djebel Shomer. However, from its comparative proximity to the latter, no less than from the character of its climate and productions, it belongs hardly so much to northern as to central Arabia, of which it is a kind of porch or vestibule. If an equilateral triangle were to be drawn, having its base from Damascus to Bagdad, the vertex would find itself pretty exactly

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at the Djowf, which is thus at a nearly equal distance, south-east and south-west, from the two localities just mentioned, while the same cross-lines, if continued, will give at about the same intervals of space in the opposite direction, Medinah on the one hand, and Zulphah, the great commercial door of Eastern Nejed, on the other. Djebel Shomer lies almost due south, and much nearer than any other of the places above specified. Partly to this central position, and partly to its own excavated form, the province owes its appropriate name of Djowf, or "belly." The "Gut," so familiar to Oxford men, is a case of analogous, nor less courtly nomenclature.

The principal, or rather the only town of the district, all the rest being mere hamlets, bears the name of the entire region. It is composed of eight villages, once distinct, but which have in process of time coalesced into one, and exchanged their separate existence and name for that of Sook, or "quarter," of the common borough. Of these Sooks (Aswak would be the Arabic plural), the principle is that belonging to the family Haboob, and in which we were now lodged. It includes the central castle already mentioned, and numbers about four hundred houses. The other quarters, some larger, others smaller, stretch up and down the valley, but are connected together by their extensive gardens. The entire length of the town thus formed, with the cultivation immediately annexed, is full four miles, but the average breadth does not exceed half a mile, and sometimes falls short of it.

The size of the domiciles varies with the condition of their occupants, and the poor are contented with narrow lodgings, though always separate; for I doubt if throughout the whole of Arabia two families, however needy, inhabit the same dwelling. Ghafil's abode, already described, may give a fair idea of the better kind; in such we have an outer court, for unlading camels and the like, an inner court, a large reception room, and several other smaller apartments, to which entrance is given by a private door, and where the family itself is lodged.

But another and a very characteristic feature of domestic architecture is the frequent addition, throughout the Djowf, of a round tower, from thirty to forty feet in height and twelve or more in breadth, with a narrow entrance and loop-holes above. This construction is sometimes contiguous to the

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dwelling place, and sometimes isolated in a neighbouring garden belonging to the same master. These towers once answered exactly the same purposes as the "torri," well known to travellers in many cities of Italy, at Bologna, Sienna, Rome, and elsewhere, and denoted a somewhat analogous state of society to what formerly prevailed there. Hither, in time of the ever-recurring feuds between rival chiefs and factions, the leaders and their partisans used to retire for refuge and defence, and hence they would make their sallies to burn and destroy. These towers, like all the modern edifices of the Djowf, are of unbaked brick; their great thickness and solidity of make, along with the extreme tenacity of the soil, joined to a very dry climate, renders the material a rival almost of stonework in strength and endurance. Indeed, the dismantled walls, when left to themselves without roof or repair, will, and this I have often witnessed, defy all the vicissitudes of winter rains and spring gales for an entire century, nor even then give much token of their age. Since the final occupation of this region by the forces of Ṭelāl, an event to be described a few pages further on, all these towers have, without exception, been rendered unfit for defence, and some are even half ruined. Here again the phenomena of Europe have repeated themselves in Arabia.

The houses are not unfrequently isolated each from the other by their gardens and plantation; and this is especially the case with the dwellings of chiefs and their families. What has just been said about the towers renders the reasons of this isolation sufficiently obvious. But the dwellings of the commoner sort are generally clustered together, though without symmetry or method. Equally irregular in form are the spaces of which every Sook is possessed for the communal meetings of its inhabitants, and which no more resemble, in mathematical correctness of outline, Grosvenor or Cavendish Square, than the rows of houses do Regent or Oxford Street.

The gardens of the Djowf are much celebrated in this part of the East, and justly so. They are of a productiveness and variety superior to those of Djebel Shomer or of Upper Nejed, and far beyond whatever the Hedjaz and its neighbourhood can offer. Here, for the first time in our southward course, we found the date-palm a main object of cultivation; and if its

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produce be inferior to that of the same tree in Nejed and Ḥasa, it is far, very far, above whatever Egypt, Africa, or the valley of the Tigris from Bagdad to Basra can show. However, the palm is by no means alone here. The apricot and the peach, the fig-tree and the vine, abound throughout these orchards, and their fruit surpasses in copiousness and flavour that supplied by the gardens of Damascus or the hills of Syria and Palestine. In the intervals between the trees or in the fields beyond, corn, leguminous plants, gourds, melons, &c. &c., are widely cultivated. Here, too, for the last time, the traveller bound for the interior sees the irrigation indispensable to all growth and tillage in this droughty climate kept up by running streams of clear water, whereas in the Nejed and its neighbourhood it has to be laboriously procured from wells and cisterns.

The ripening season of the different kinds of fruit or harvest is, of course, earlier here than in Syria, not to say Europe. Djowf apricots are in full maturity by the end of May, and the vintage falls in July; peaches delay till August, dates till August and September. Further south, in Nejed, for instance, all these periods are respectively anticipated by about a month, and in 'Omān by two months at least. Much did I regret in these places my inability to have with me either thermometer or any similar instrument for ascertaining the niceties of the temperature and atmosphere; but such kind of baggage would have been too inconsistent in Arab eyes with my assumed character, too European, in short; besides that, what between jolting camels ond roughly-packed saddle-bags, a long glass tube would have run but an indifferent chance of preserving its integrity, even so far as the Djowf. But some rough estimate of the average temperature may be gathered from what I have just said of the fruit-ripening periods in these regions and from other analogous circumstances; and were we to place the general standard of the Djowf thermometer in the shade at noon during the months of June, July, and August at about 90° or 95° Fahr., we should not, I think, be far wrong for this valley. At night the air is, with very few exceptions, cool, at least comparatively, so that a variation of twenty or more degrees often occurs within a very short period.

The gardens just described are everywhere enclosed by high

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walls of unbaked brick, and are intersected by a labyrinth of little watercourses passing from tree to tree and from furrow to furrow. Among all their different kinds of produce one only is considered as a regular article of sale and export—the date; and from this the inhabitants derive a tolerable revenue, not, indeed, by traffic within the limits of the Djowf itself, where every one is supplied from his own trees, but from the price received in exchange at Tabook or Ḥā'yel, Damascus and Bagdad, for even so far is this fruit carried. It is almost incredible how large a part the date plays in Arab sustenance; it is the bread of the land, the staff of life, and the staple of commerce. Mahomet, who owed his wonderful success at least as much to his intense nationality as to any other cause, whether natural or supernatural, is said to have addressed his followers on the subject in these words: "Honour the date-tree, for she is your mother;" a slight extension of the fifth commandment, though hardly, perhaps, exceeding the legislative powers of a prophet. Yet, with all due deference for authority and experience, I cannot exactly agree with him in thinking this leafy mother fully entitled to so unreserved a commendation. The date is too luscious a food not to weary at last, and is, besides, when dried, too heating to be healthy when devoured in the enormous quantities which are here taken. Indeed, if I may be allowed the conjecture, I am inclined to ascribe in great measure a form of chronic gastritis, nay, even of fatal ulceration of the stomach, remarkably common among the Arabs of the interior, to their over-continuance in a date diet.

The Djowf, being a mere collection of houses and gardens intermingled as it were at random, is naturally unwalled; the number and bravery of its inhabitants may well suffice to guard them against Bedouin incursions, nor had they any other enemy to dread for many years, till in the last century Wahhabee despotism, and at a yet later period the growing power of Djebel Shomer and its chief, successively assailed and absorbed them.

The castle and the solitary tower of Mārid are objects requiring a separate description, and such may accordingly be better reserved to the visit which we shall soon pay them.

Besides the Djowf itself, or capital, there exist several other villages belonging to the same homonymous province, and all

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subject to the same central governor. Of these the largest is Seḳāḳah; it lies at about twelve miles distant to the north-east, and though inferior to the principal town in importance and fertility of soil, almost equals it in the number of its inhabitants. I should reckon the united populations of these two localities—men, women, and children—at about thirty-three or thirty-four thousand souls. This calculation, like many others before us in the course of the work, rests partly on an approximate survey of the number of dwellings, partly on the military muster, and partly on what I heard on the subject from the natives themselves. A census is here unknown, and no register records birth, marriage, or death. Yet, by aid of the war list, which generally represents about one-tenth of the entire population, a fair though not an absolute, idea may be obtained on this point.

Lastly, around and at no great distance from these main centres are several small villages or hamlets, eight or ten in number, as I was told, and containing each of them from twenty to fifty or sixty houses. But I had neither time nor opportunity to visit each separately. Such a village is Djoon, mentioned near the close of the preceding chapter; Ḳāra, in the opposite or easterly direction: Ḍorrah, close by the Djowf on the road to Seḳāḳah, and others. They cluster round lesser water springs, and offer in miniature features much resembling those of the capital. The entire population of the province cannot exceed forty or forty-two thousand, but it is a brave one.

The inhabitants have not much to say regarding their own origin or the date of their first settlement here, nor do they possess any records of historical value on such topics. Thus far only can they affirm, that they were once Christians, and that their earliest conversion to Islamism was effected by that most trenchant of all arguments, the sword, in the hands of 'Alee and Khalid-ebn-Waleed. At a later period, like the inhabitants of Arabia in general, they relapsed into semi-paganism, and the worship of local genii, or Djann, as they call them, till the sword of the Wahhabee conqueror revived their Islam, to what purpose or extent we shall soon see. In pedigree they lay claim to be descended from the great clan of Ṭā'i, celebrated in old Arab history; and indeed, whatever we know for certain of the locali-

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zation and extent of that tribe in Northern Arabia, and a certain similarity of ways and customs, so far as we can institute a comparison between present condition and the scanty records of the past seems to confirm their title to that lineage, though intermixed, it would seem, with other neighbouring tribes, especially Bakr and Howāzin. All beyond this is mere matter of conjecture, ingenious, perhaps, but not very profitable. Nowhere in Arabia have I met with scantier popular reminiscences and less of the old clannish feeling than in Djowf.

Nor did I hear any details worth recording about the events which signalized their subjection to the Wahhabee monarch towards the end of the last century or the beginning of this. But after the overthrow of the Nejdean empire by the conquest of Ibraheem Bacha in 1817 and 1818, the Djowf recovered an independence which her weakened condition could hardly enable her to maintain. In addition to the effects of Wahhabee pillage and despotism, the people had much to suffer from continual and sanguinary contests between the several Sooḳs or quarters of the capital, and each petty chief of the province strove to extend his authority, or rather his tyranny, over the rest. Hence they were plunged with scarce an interval in a complicated and ruinous civil war, so much so that many of the older inhabitants assured me that in those times it was not uncommon for a man to be born, live, and die at one end of the Djowf without any intermission of hostilities sufficient to permit him to visit the other end in safety throughout the whole of that period.

Thus ruined, as they well might be, by the consequences of foreign invasion and internal discord, the unfortunate Djowfites became more and more subject to the insults of the Bedouins around, and at last the powerful tribe of the Ru'alas, whose summer pastures, as I have already noticed, are in Syria, while their winter is generally passed in this neighbourhood, so far gained the mastery over them, that the Djowf was compelled to pay an annual tribute, entitled Khoo'wah, or fraternity, by way of ransom from worse molestation, much like the black mail of the Borders, or the Dane-gelt of our Saxon ancestors.

Meanwhile 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed, father of the present monarch Ṭelāl, was occupied in founding and consolidating his

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new kingdom of Djebel Shomer at no great distance to the south. The mutual contests of the different chiefs gave him a suitable pretext for interfering in the affairs of the Djowf, whose possession he could not but covet. When at last he thought the moment favourable he ordered his brother 'Obeyd to conduct thither an army fully sufficient for the subjugation of that province. But whether 'Obeyd did not feel himself strong enough to maintain his conquest, or from other reasons, he contented himself with arranging in a temporary manner the disputes of the several chiefs and Sooḳs, and after appointing one of the family Ḥaboob as vice-governor in his brother's name he compelled the people to reassume the neglected practices of Mahometan worship, and having exacted a yearly tribute to the treasury of Djebel Shomer, he then retired.

Disputes, a moment suppressed by common fear, were not long in breaking out anew; and on the death of the chief whom 'Obeyd had named as governor, the family of Ḥaboob divided itself into two hostile sections, each headed by its pretender to rule and power. One of the most active in this ill-timed family broil was our host Ghāfil. 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed was by this time dead, and had been succeeded on the throne of Shomer by his eldest son Ṭelāl, a warrior even more energetic than his father, and infinitely his superior in the arts of statesmanship. To this prince, Ghāfil and his faction, who had been worsted in their late contest now applied for help. This took place in 1855. Ṭelāl thought the occasion a good one for completing what his father and uncle had begun. While he flattered the refugees with delusive promises, he collected a considerable force, backed up by two heavy pieces of artillery, and thus attended marched in person to the Djowf. When at a certain distance from the capital he pitched his camp, and for many days together amused the inhabitants with various proposals and negotiations, showing the while an affected reluctance to bring matters to the arbitration of the sword. The family Ḥaboob, already over-confident in the stone walls of their old citadel, were readily brought by this apparently dilatory conduct of Ṭelāl's to despise their crafty enemy more and more, and accordingly refused to come to terms. Ṭelāl then began active hostilities, but at first on a small scale, sending out

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skirmishers and plundering parties, calculated to provoke and harass rather than subdue, while he kept his main strength in reserve for the decisive moment. The artifice succeeded; his enemies grew still bolder, and offered a general battle, which he more than once declined. At last one morning he availed himself of an autumn mist, such as occasionally covers the low grounds even in this clear climate, and concealed the main body of his troops in the windings of the valley close by, while his cavalry provoked the men of Djowf to come out against them in larger numbers than usual. When the conflict was fully engaged, the prince of Shomer suddenly brought forward his two cannons, old clumsy articles indeed, but formidable engines of war for these countries, and directed their fire against the masonry of the castle, never intended to resist such a shock. At the dreaded report of the guns, and still more when they saw the ramparts of their strength fast crumbling piecemeal before the bullets, the Ḥaboob chieftains with their followers fell into panic confusion. This was what Ṭelāl had waited for; he immediately ordered up his entire army, and in a moment the rout of the enemy was complete. Pursued and pursuers entered the town pell-mell, great slaughter was made, the castle was taken, and the Djowf conquered before noon.

The first thing Ṭelāl did on coming thus into possession was to destroy all the dwellings belonging to the hostile faction of Beyt Ḥaboob, to cut down their palm-trees, and to drive the surviving chiefs of the party out of the town into a distant exile, whence, in spite of many entreaties made in their behalf by their friends and relatives, he has never suffered them to return. Ghāfil now expected his nomination as governor; but the conqueror had resolved to make the Djowf entirely his own, and for this a different and more durable system of rule was absolutely necessary. Without delay he constituted one of his own personal followers, Ḥamood by name, governor of the town and province, while he at the same time deprived the local chiefs, the Ghāfil among the rest, of every vestige of administrative authority. In their stead he placed three of his confidential retainers, natives of his own capital, Ḥā'yel, to act as auxiliaries, council, or check on the new governor, as circumstances might require; and, lastly, he selected from among the common people of the Djowf itself

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a certain number of men, whom he formed into a kind of body-guard for his vicegerent, taking care that they should receive arms and salary from Ḥamood alone. After this he took with him four of the principal nobles yet remaining as hostages for the good conduct of their countrymen, and conducted them back with himself to Djebel Shomer.

Since that time the Djowf has been administered by Ḥamood and his three associates in Ṭelāl's name. No intestine squabbles are permitted, and instead of Khoo'wah or black mail to the profit of Ru'alas, and their fellow nomades, a moderate but regular land and cattle tax is paid to the established government. Under the new arrangements the entire district has regained much of its former strength and prosperity, and the inhabitants, once degraded by licence and social quarrels almost to the level of Bedouins, have made a certain advance towards civilized life, while they have also gone on steadily increasing in wealth, numbers, and commercial activity. And it is to their own consciousness of these very advantages, quite as much or more than to the awe inspired by superior power, that we should ascribe the readiness with which the greater number have continued to bear, up to the present date, the yoke of a foreign rule and ruler without any symptom of disobedience, or any attempt, however partial, at insurrection.

These descendants of Ṭā'i, if such they really be, are very liberally provided with the physical endowments of which it has been acutely said that they are seldom despised save by those who do not themselves possess them. Tall, well-proportioned, of a tolerably fair complexion, set off by long curling locks of jet-black hair, with features for the most part regular and intelligent, and a dignified carriage, they are eminently good specimens of what may be called the pure northern or Ismaelitish Arab type, and in all these respects yield the palm to the inhabitants of Djebel Shomer alone. Their large-developed forms and open countenance contrast strongly with the somewhat dwarfish stature and suspicious under-glance of the Bedouin. They are, besides, a very healthy people, and keep up their strength and activity even to an advanced age. It is no uncommon occurrence here to see an old man of seventy set out full-armed among a band of youths; though, by the way, such

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"green old age" is often to be met with also in the central provinces further south, as I have had frequent opportunity of witnessing. The climate, too, is good and dry, and habits of out-door life contribute not a little to the maintenance of health and vigour.

In manners, as in locality, the worthies of Djowf occupy a sort of half-way position between Bedouins and the inhabitants of the cultivated districts. Thus they partake largely in the nomade's aversion to mechanical occupations, in his indifference to literary acquirements, in his aimless fickleness too, and even in his treacherous ways. And though in general much superior in politeness and in self-respect to the Sherarat and their fellows, they are equally far from displaying the dignified and even polished courtesy usual in Shomer and Nejed, much less that of Ḥaṣa and 'Omān. On the other hand, in cleanliness of person and habitation, in agricultural skill, in reasoning powers, in a sort of local patriotism, in capacity for treating with strangers and conducting commerce, and even in an occasional desire of instruction and progress, they come nearer to the remaining townsmen and villagers of the Peninsula. They were, in fact, originally, to judge by the annals of Ṭā'i, a fairly civilized race after the old Arab fashion, and have still a positive tendency to become so once more, though long held back by the untoward circumstances of war and faction, besides the deteriorating influence of the savage tribes amongst whom they are in a way isolated by their geographical situation. The following incident, in which we ourselves had nearly played a very prominent, though by no means an equally agreeable part, may serve for a tolerable illustration of their actual state between these conflicting tendencies.

I have said in the preceding chapter, that while we were yet threading the narrow gorge near the first entrance of the valley, several horsemen appeared on the upper margin of the pass, and one of them questioned our guide, and then, after a short consultation with his companions, called out to us to go on and fear nothing. Now the name of this individual was Sulman-ebn-Ḍāhir, a very adventurous and fairly intelligent young fellow, with whom next-door neighbourhood and frequent intercourse rendered us intimate during our stay at the Djowf. One

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day, while we were engaged in friendly conversation, he said, half laughing, "Do you know what we were consulting about while you were in the pass below on the morning of your arrival? It was whether we should make you a good reception, and thus procure ourselves the advantage of having you residents amongst us, or whether we should not do better to kill you all three, and take our gain from the booty to be found in your baggage." I replied with equal coolness, "It might have proved an awkward affair for yourself and your friends, since Ḥamood your governor could hardly have failed to get wind of the matter, and would have taken it out of you." "Pooh!" replied our friend, "never a bit; as if a present out of the plunder would not have tied Ḥamood's tongue." "Bedouins that you are," said I, laughing. "Of course we are," answered Sulman, "for such we all were till quite lately, and the present system is too recent to have much changed us." However, he admitted that they all had, on second thoughts, congratulated themselves on not having preferred bloodshed to hospitality, though perhaps the better resolution was rather owing to interested than to moral motives.

The most distinctive good feature of the inhabitants of Djowf is their liberality. Nowhere else, even in Arabia, is the guest, so at least he be not murdered before admittance, better treated, or more cordially invited to become in every way one of themselves. Courage, too, no one denies them, and they are equally lavish of their own lives and property as of their neighbours'. Their central position, already explained, is favourable to commerce, though the long distances which must be traversed to or from their valley limits this commerce, with few exceptions, to certain fixed seasons of the year, namely, the cooler months of winter and spring. Yet they have not yet learnt to appreciate the advantages of establishing a regular market-place for their wares, nor does a single shop exist even in the capital. Buying and selling are carried on in the private dwelling-places themselves, and the workshop of the artisan is also his domicile. This system has been established and is still maintained in favour of the monopoly thus thrown into the hands of the local chief in the respective quarters of the town, but it seems likely

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to be abandoned for a better, at least if the present rule be maintained for some years to come.

In religion the Djowf affords all the anomalies customary in Arabia on that subject, and even something more. Like the most of their brethren, they had long since abandoned the very name of Mahometanism for a local fetichism and a semi-Sabæan worship, for prayers to the sun, and sacrifices to the dead. But under the Wahhabee denomination Islam in its purest, its most uncompromising form, had been awhile forced upon them under penalty of the sword. This was not much to their taste, and met with a very limited and only a superficial success.

My readers may have already observed that my narrative resembles somewhat the journey it describes, full of divergences and circuitous passages. Let me then be here allowed a moment's pause on the way to consider that curious and important object, the religious aspect of the Arab race in general; we shall hardly meet with a more fitting opportunity. The Arabs are, generally speaking, rather a believing than a religious nation; nor is the phase of mind hereby indicated a mere paradox, as one might at first sight hold it to be. Men who readily grant an abstract belief to everything are not unlikely to reconcile, in a practical way, the many contradictions thus admitted into their theory by acting on nothing. Christian, Jewish, Mahometan, or Pagan creeds and forms,—the Arab, when left to himself, does not see why they should not all be equally true, equally estimable, while at the same time he does not either see any very cogent reason for following one rather than the other; and thus comes to the happy conclusion of binding himself to none. Not that he entertains the smallest doubt regarding the divine mission of any of the six hundred prophets generally enumerated from Adam down to Mahomet inclusively, and even El-Moḳannaa' himself, as we shall ultimately see in 'Omān, but he is unwilling to give any one of them in particular an adherence prejudicial to the rights of the rest. Besides he is fond of ease and impatient of restraint; stated prayers annoy him, long prayers tire him, ablutions are inconvenient, and fasting, especially in presence of a fat sheep, is quite out of the question, if indeed his ordinary allowance of nutriment might not be called a perpetual fast, and even a severe one.

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It is true that among a very large number this immense latitude of belief has led to an equally or even a more logical consequence, namely, entire scepticism, and a settled resolution to prefer the certain to the uncertain, the present to the future.

> Shall I abandon the pleasures of the pure wine-goblet
> For all they tell me about milk and honey hereafter?
> Life, and death, and resurrection to follow,
> —Stuff and nonsense, my dear Madam:

are the too celebrated lines of a very popular Arab poet, and I have often heard them quoted in moments of unreserved conversation with unequivocal approval on the part of all present. Not that even thus the Arab exactly disbelieves, but that he has made up his mind not to "fash his thumb" about the matter.

That the Turks are in their way a religious people may be fully admitted. That the Mogols, the inhabitants of Balkh and Bokhara, of Herat and Beloochistan, are even more religious nationally and individually, I am entirely convinced. But at whatever risk of startling my readers, accustomed perhaps to a popularly opposite view of the case, I must protest against the right of the Arabs as such to be in any way entitled a religious nation. Had the Mahometan scheme been entrusted to Arab keeping alone, had not Persian, Mogol, Turkish, nay, at times European influence and race come in to its aid, few would have been ere this the readers of the Coran and the fasters of Ramaḍan.

A reverential is not necessarily a religious people. With few nations throughout Europe has religion proved more sparingly a direct cause of action than with the English; the fact is acknowledged by all; yet perhaps no nation in Europe is equally reverential. The Italian, the Spaniard, the Greek are, in a certain sense of the word, each and all more religious than the Englishman; yet blasphemy and manifold irreverence of word and deed are much more common in Italy, Spain, and Greece than in England. This I say simply in order to throw a light, somewhat novel it may be, yet, I think, true, on the Arab mind, which here, and in many other respects besides, bears a certain resemblance to the English. Some travellers have said that the Persians are the Frenchmen of the East; perhaps they said it in haste, indeed I hope so; for to compare Europeans with

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Persians is but a bad compliment to the former. If, however, such like vague and incomplete assimilations can bear a real meaning, I would unhesitatingly affirm Arabs to be the English of the Oriental world.

A strong love and a high appreciation of national and personal liberty, a hatred of minute interference and special regulations, a great respect for authority so long as it be decently well exercised, joined with a remarkable freedom from anything like caste-feeling in what concerns ruling families and dynasties; much practical good sense, much love of commercial enterprise, a great readiness to undertake long journeys and voluntary expatriation by land and sea in search of gain and power; patience to endure, and perseverance in the employment of means to ends, courage in war, vigour in peace, and lastly, the marked predominance of a superior race over whomever they come in contact with among their Asiatic or African neighbours, a superiority admitted by these last as a matter of course and an acknowledged right;—all these are features hardly less characteristic of the Englishman than of the Arab; yet that these are features distinctive of the Arab nation, taken, of course, on its more favourable side, will hardly, I think, be denied by any experienced and unprejudiced man. This, I need not say, like most other broad statements, admits of many exceptions, and requires much illustration and explanatory proof, and such will, I trust, be furnished by the course of our narrative, interwoven as it will be with the history, political or moral, of the provinces we visit and the localities we traverse, while it conveys those particulars which may aid to reconcile apparent contradiction or rectify partial views. But it is now high time to find our way back from digression after digression to matters of a more personal and individual nature.

On the morning after our arrival—it was now the 1st of July—Ghāfil caused a small house in the neighbourhood, belonging to one of his dependants, to be put at our entire disposal, according to our previous request. This our new abode consisted of a small court, with two rooms, one on each side, for warehouse and habitation, the whole being surrounded with an outer wall, whose door was closed by lock and bolt. Of a kitchen-room there was small need, so constant and hospitable are the invitations

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of the good folks here to strangers; and if our house was not over spacious, it afforded at least what we most desired, namely, seclusion and privacy at will; it was, moreover, at our host's cost, rent and reparations.

Hither accordingly we transferred baggage and chattels, and arranged everything as comfortably as we best could. And as we had already concluded from the style and conversation of those around us, that their state of society was hardly far enough advanced to offer a sufficiently good prospect for medical art, whose exercise to be generally advantageous requires a certain amount of culture and aptitude in the patient, no less than of skill in the physician, we resolved to make commerce our main affair here, trusting that by so doing we should gain a second advantage, that of lightening our more bulky goods, such as coffee and cloth, whose transport had already annoyed us not a little.

But in fact we were not more desirous to sell than the men, women, and children of the Djowf were to buy. From the very outset our little courtyard was crowded with customers, and the most amusing scenes of Arab haggling, in all its mixed shrewdness and simplicity, diverted us through the week. Handkerchief after handkerchief, yard after yard of cloth, beads for the women, knives, combs, looking-glasses, and what not? (for our stock was a thorough miscellany), were soon sold off, some for ready money, others on credit; and it is but justice to say that all debts so contracted were soon paid in very honestly; Oxford High Street tradesmen, at least in former times, were not always equally fortunate.

Meanwhile we had the very best opportunity of becoming acquainted with and appreciating all classes, nay, almost all individuals of the place. Peasants too from Saḳāḳah, from Ḳāra, and from the other hamlets arrived, led by rumour, whose trumpet, prone to exaggerate under every sky, had proclaimed us throughout the valley of Djowf for much more important characters and possessed of a much larger stock in hand than was really the case. All crowded in, and before long there were more customers than wares assembled in the store-room.

Ghāfil, for his part, employed a hundred petty artifices to prevent our selling the coffee, which he vehemently desired to

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reserve for his own bargain. No sooner had we an offer for it, than he sent some of his relations or friends to dissuade us from coming to terms; and though we had early perceived his aim, we thought it best to wink at it, willing to gratify our first and principal host, even at the cost of some slight loss to ourselves.

I say, our principal host, for everybody who had a dinner or a supper to offer was also our host at the Djowf; invitations rained in on all sides, and it would have been considered a shame on the hospitality of the people in general, and a blot on their fair name, had we ever been left to dine twice under the same roof. Our manner of passing the time was as follows. We used to rise at early dawn, lock up the house, and go out in the pure cool air of the morning to some quiet spot among the neighbouring palm-groves, or scale the wall of some garden, or pass right on through the bye-lanes to where cultivation merges in the adjoining sands of the valley; in short, to any convenient place where we might hope to pass an hour of quiet undisturbed by Arab sociability, and have leisure to plan our work for the day. We would then return home about sunrise, and find outside the door some tall lad sent by his father, generally one of the wealthier and more influential inhabitants of the quarter, yet unvisited by us, waiting our return, to invite us to an early breakfast. We would now accompany our Mercury to his domicile, where a hearty reception, and some neighbours collected for the occasion, or attracted by a cup of good coffee, (at which any true Arab would make a spring were it placed on the other side of the bottomless pit, more surely than an Englishman would at his roast beef,) were sure to be in attendance. Here an hour or so would wear away, and some medical or mercantile transaction be sketched out. We of course would bring the conversation, whenever it was possible, on local topics, according as those present seemed likely to afford us exacter knowledge and insight into the real state and circumstances of the land. We would then return to our own quarters, where a crowd of customers awaiting us, would allow us neither rest nor pause till noon. Then a short interval for date or pumpkin eating in some neighbour's house would occur, and after that business be again resumed for three or four hours. A walk among the gardens, rarely alone, more often in company with

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friends and acquaintances, would follow; and meanwhile an invitation to supper somewhere had unfailingly been given and accepted.

This important meal is here, as almost everywhere else in Arab towns, a little before sunset. The staple article of Djowf fare, and in Djebel Shomer also, is Djereeshah, that is, wheat coarsely ground, and then boiled; butter and meat are added, sometimes vegetables, gourds, cucumbers, and the like; eggs, hard-boiled by the way, occasionally come in; but however various the items, the whole is piled up heapwise on one large copper dish, of circular form, and often a foot and a half or even two feet in diameter. The food itself is served scalding hot, but is to be eaten with the hand alone; not that any philosophical or moral objection exists to forks and spoons, as I have seen ingeniously stated by an author—French, of course—but simply that those articles are not to be had here, nor are they indeed any way requisite where soup and joints of roast meat are alike out of the question. Bread never figures at a Djowf supper, though it is common enough at breakfast. This article assumes in Arabia infinite varieties of form and quality; here it consists of large unleavened cakes of a moderate thickness, less than that of the Jewish Massoth in these times. Dates are often added to represent garnish at supper; from what meal indeed are they absent? No drink but water is known hereabouts, though date-tree wine might easily be manufactured, and the old poets and writers of Northern Arabia often mention it; but it has now gone out of fashion, and even remembrance.

After supper all rise, wash their hands, and then go out into the open air to sit and smoke a quiet pipe under the still transparent sky of the summer evening. Neither mist nor vapour, much less a cloud, appears; the moon dips down in silvery whiteness to the very verge of the palm-tree tops, and the last rays of daylight are almost as sharp and clear as the dawn itself. Chat and society continue for an hour or two, and then every one goes home, most to sleep, I fancy, for few Penseroso lamps are here to be seen at midnight hour, nor does the spirit of Plato stand much risk of unsphering from the nocturnal studies of the Djowf; we, to write our journal, or to compare observations and estimate characters.

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Sometimes a comfortable landed proprietor would invite us to pass an extemporary holiday morning in his garden, or rather orchard, there to eat grapes and enjoy ourselves at will, seated under clustering vine-trellises, with palm-trees above and running streams around. How pleasant it was after the desert! At other times visits of patients, prescriptions, and similar duties would take up a part of the day; or some young fellow, particularly desirous of information about Syria or Egypt, to which he might have a mind to travel on a "spree," or perhaps curious after history and moral science, would hold us for a couple of hours in serious and sensible talk, at any rate to our advantage.

We were known to all for Christians, and welcomed as such; but very seldom does an Arab render himself guilty of the "indiscretion" of talking in a personal way about religion to a stranger; though a more general style of discussion, accompanied by distant and hardly perceptible allusions to the parties present, is not uncommon. Of our medical or mercantile character very few affected to doubt. However, some more malicious or more perspicacious than the rest, suspected something too near the truth to be precisely pleasant or safe for us, and whispered Ḥamood that the two Syrians or Egyptians were at bottom "mufsideen," that is, "innovators," or revolutionists, whom it would be good service to the country to put effectually out of the way. But the governor took a more favourable, if not a more correct, view of our case, and answered that we had as yet given no indications of innovating or revolutionary conduct, and that mere suspicions could not be deemed sufficient warrant for extreme measures; that, besides, we were on our way to Ṭelāl, whose clear-sightedness was not to be imposed on by any "mufsideen" soever; and who, should we be really such, would not fail soon to find us out, and treat us according to our deserts. And with such replies he dismissed the informers, who belonged, I need hardly say, to the fanatic or Wahhabee faction.

Such a faction does really exist even here, but it is far from prevalent. Of the policy which leads Ṭelāl to tolerate that party in his dominions, and sometimes to encourage, sometimes repress, and of the influence exerted by it on the government

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and people, we shall find fitter occasion to speak when arrived at the monarch's residence, Ḥā'yel.

Let us now pay our official visit to Ḥamood. To this Ghāfil, after delaying as long as he decently could, at last consented on the fourth day after our arrival. We accordingly set out from his house all together, in great state and gravity, accompanied by a bevy of Ḥaboob kinsmen, and wound for a full quarter of an hour through narrow garden alleys, overshaded by palms and moist with flowing waters, till we emerged on a large open space just at the rise of the castle mound. On one side, but at some distance, rose the solitary round tower of "Mārid," or "the Rebellious," whose massive stone walls are more than once mentioned in Arab poetry. But its architecture offers no trace of Greek or Roman skill; it is clearly the work of Arab labour and on an Arab plan, and being such presents but little to the study of the artist or the archæologist. However, the actual tenants of the soil, themselves incapable of similar constructions, gaze on it with an admiration in which a European can hardly share.

To avoid, however, all injustice to Arab architecture and arts, we ought to remark that this district, including Teymah and Djebel Shomer, has always been among all the inhabited portions of the Peninsula the most backward in the march of civilization both in time and degree, and inferior not only in building-craft, but in every other acquirement, to the centre, south, and east of the land. Nor is the reason far to seek. A fertile soil is generally the first condition and often the proportional measure, at least for the time, of the civilization of a people. Thus the three most productive spots known in the early world, namely, Egypt, the valley of Euphrates, and that of the Ganges, are also the first recorded cradles of art and science; while the forests and swamps of Germany, the steppes of Russia, and the Mongolian plateau, long remained—indeed, the last still remains so—far behind in the "increasing purpose" of the ages, abodes of barbarism, and but tardily accessible to advancement. Now of all the districts into which Arabia is geographically or politically divided, that of which we are now speaking, and whose principal centres lie at the Djowf, Shomer, and Teymah, is in a general way the least fertile; the desert

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itself, of course, always excepted. Nejed, more favoured by nature, far outstripped these northerly tracts in arts also, and was herself in her turn outdone by the still more fertile Ḥaṣa, while 'Omān and Yemen, the two provinces of the Peninsula richest in natural resources, became also at an early date possessors of civilization and attainments far surpassing those of all other regions then tenanted by the Arab race. In a word, though man may complete, nature must take the lead. I am aware that to this rule a few exceptions may indeed be adduced, but here special causes have been probably at work.

Below us where we now stand on the uprising ground of the citadel lie the ruined dwellings of the chiefs of Ḥaboob, slaughtered or exiled; and all around them the stumps of palm-trees cut down or burnt, and the traces of now unwatered gardens bear witness to the late war. Above in front of us rises the castle itself, now the residence of Ḥamood. It is a large irregular mass of rough masonry, patched up and added to again and again, till its original rectangular form has almost disappeared. Indeed, the southerly side is the only one that has preserved its first line of construction tolerably unbroken, and here the huge size and exact squaring of the stones in the lower tiers indicates the early date of the fabric, while several small windows, at a height of about ten or twelve feet from the ground, are topped by what, if I remember right, is called the Cyclopean arch—a specimen of which may yet be seen in the so-called Palace of Atreus at Mycenæ—that most primitive of constructions, in which two flat stones are placed slantways against each other. Near the centre of the castle stands a square tower, very broad for its height, which hardly exceeds fifty feet, while the sides have each a breadth of twenty, or thereabouts. It seems to belong to a later period than the southern wall, and has narrow loopholes for defence. A large semicircular curtain, coming round from this keep to a corner of the outer enclosure, is evidently of yet more recent fabrication, being built roughly and unsystematically with rubble and coarse blocks, whereas in the stonework of the tower some attempt at regularity has been kept up. The entrance gate, placed at the southern angle of this motley pile, seems coeval with the main tower rather than with the older remains; it is arched, and in this differs from the style used in Nejed,

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where doors and roofs alike are always flat; a projecting parapet crowns it above, and its approach is somewhat guarded by the flanking walls, between which it retreats a little. Within, the castle courts and galleries are paved with large irregular flags, well fitted together, much like what we see in some streets of Florence; and the passages that lead to the interior are long, dark, and vaulted. Here on one of the lateral walls I noticed two deeply-cut crosses, certainly of ancient date, and such as not unfrequently occur amid the ruins of Ḥauran in Syria; they supply an additional testimony to the prevalence of the Christian religion here in a former age.

The entrances, at the moment of our arrival, were almost filled up by the attendants of Ḥamood, all armed with swords or guns, and tolerably well dressed, but without any distinctive badge or livery. We passed through the midst of them, receiving the stares of the idle and the salutations of the polite, till we reached a second inner court, close under the keep just described, and there Ḥamood was seated in his Ḳ'hāwah, or reception room, a large and gloomy apartment, with high raised seats of stone against the two sides farthest from the fireplace; this last was placed, as usual, in the corner farthest from the entrance.

There, in the place of distinction, which he never yields to any individual of Djowf, whatever be his birth or wealth, appeared the governor, a strong, broad-shouldered, dark-browed, dark-eyed man, clad in the long white shirt of the country, and over it a handsome black cloak, embroidered with crimson silk; on his august head a silken handkerchief or Ḳeffee'yeh, girt by a white band of finely woven camel's hair; and in his fingers a grass fan. He rose graciously on our approach, extended to us the palm of his hand, and made us sit down near his side, keeping, however, Ghāfil, as an old acquaintance, between himself and us, perhaps as a precautionary arrangement against any sudden assault or treasonable intention on our part, for an Arab, be he who he may, is never off his guard when new faces are in presence. In other respects he showed us much courtesy and good will, made many civil enquiries about our health after so fatiguing a journey, praised Damascus and the Damascenes, by way of an indirect compliment, and offered us a lodging in the castle. But here Ghāfil availed himself of the privileges conceded by Arab

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custom to priority of hostship to put in his negative on our behalf; nor were we anxious to press the matter. A pound or so of our choicest coffee, with which we on this occasion presented his excellency, both as a mute witness to the object of our journey, and the better to secure his good will, was accepted very readily by the great man, who in due return offered us his best services. We replied that we stood in need of nothing save his long life, this being the Arab formula for rejoinder to such fair speeches; and, next in order, of means to get safe on to Ḥā'yel so soon as our business at the Djowf should permit, being desirous to establish ourselves under the immediate patronage of Ṭelāl. In this he promised to aid us, and he kept his word.

Of course coffee was served and dates eaten. Meanwhile the three men of Shomer, whom I have mentioned as Ḥamood's council or check-weight, after keeping silence awhile where they sat on the raised stone platform opposite to the governor, now entered into familiar conversation. They were all three well-looking middle-aged individuals, wearing the light cotton handkerchief spotted with red or blue, which is almost peculiar to Djebel Shomer, and everything in their personal appearance bespoke a degree of culture and intelligence placing them considerably above the inhabitants of the Djowf, and even above Ḥamood himself, who, although prudent and skilful enough in his affairs, is yet half a Bedouin in manners, and thereby all the better suited to the people he rules. With much ease and off-handedness they drew us into talk, showed great interest in our well-doing, and united in encouraging us to lose no time in making our way to Ḥā'yel, where they assured us of an excellent welcome from Ṭelāl. This was the first time that we heard the genuine Arabic of the interior spoken, and we were both of us much struck by its extreme purity and grace, accompanied by an extreme elegance of enunciation; it is in fact the language of the Coran, neither more nor less, with all its niceties, inflections, and desinences, not one is lost or slurred over. Our ears were further charmed by the desire they manifested to witness some display of medical skill, and by the promise that our art would be duly appreciated and earnestly sought after in Djebel Shomer, while Ṭelāl himself was by their account a sort of Augustus and Mæcenas in one, and not a whit less superior to Ḥamood than

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the town of Ḥā'yel to the semi-Bedouin village where we now were.

Close by these lords of the privy council sat the Meṭowwaa', or minister—clergyman, if you will, (the literal meaning of the Arabic word is, "one who enforces obedience," to God, understood,)—an old sour-faced gentleman sent hither to teach the men of Djowf their catechism, and little liked either by his scholars or his companions; a circumstance nowise tending to improve his habitually bad temper. In a Friday's sermon, at which I was present, he gave vent to his zealous wrath at the irremediable lukewarmness of the Djowfite Gallios, and threatened them with such an outpouring of Divine vengeance, that he quite overdid his subject, and provoked a sarcastic laugh where he calculated on terror and contrition. From this worthy, as my readers may expect, we met with no especial tokens of benevolence.

During the eighteen days which went by in the Djowf, Ḥamood, with all his council, very politely returned our visit; and we on our part made frequent excursions to the castle, and more than once partook of its hospitality, or passed a spare hour in studying the various and interesting scenes it presented. For Ḥamood, in virtue of his judicial and executive powers, held every morning, and some afternoons also, long audiences in behalf of whoever had grievances to redress or claims to advance; the contending parties would on such occasions come to plead their cause in person before him in the Ḳ'hāwah; and the governor himself, after a patient hearing, would pronounce sentence. I ought to say that cases of life and death, along with all permanent legislative acts, are reserved for the head jurisdiction of Ḥā'yel; whatever falls short of these is left to the vicegerent, who has accordingly plenty of work to go through, the more so that it has almost all to be done personally. A lawyer would have but an indifferent chance of livelihood in Arabia, where every one, the very Bedouins included, has eloquence and presence of mind enough to defend his own cause; and the chicane of courts would be of little purpose in such an assembly, though bribery is not always absent nor unsuccessful. I was much amused by the simplicity and straightforwardness of all parties in these tribunals; a court-martial is complicated in comparison. But when the plaintiff

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or defendant chances to be a Bedouin, we have a thorough comedy; the following, for instance.

One day my comrade and myself were on a visit of mere politeness at the castle, the customary ceremonies had been gone through, and business, at first interrupted by our entrance, had resumed its course. A Bedouin of the Ma'āz tribe was pleading his cause before Ḥamood, and accusing some one of having forcibly taken away his camel. The governor was seated with an air of intense gravity in his corner, half leaning on a cushion, while the Bedouin, cross-legged on the ground before him, and within six feet of his person, flourished in his hand a large reaping-hook, identically that which is here used for cutting grass. Energetically gesticulating with this graceful implement, he thus challenged his judge's attention. "You, Ḥamood, do you hear?" (stretching out at the same time the hook towards the governor, so as almost to reach his body, as though he meant to rip him open); "he has taken from me my camel; have you called God to mind?" (again putting his weapon close to the unflinching magistrate); "the camel is my camel; do you hear?" (with another reminder from the reaping-hook); "he is mine, by God's award and yours too; do you hear, child?" and so on, while Ḥamood sat without moving a muscle of face or limb, imperturbable and impassible, till some one of the counsellors quieted the plaintiff, with "Remember God, child; it is of no consequence, you shall not be wronged." Then the judge called on the witnesses, men of the Djowf, to say their say, and on their comfirmation of the Bedouin's statement, gave orders to two of his satellites to search for and bring before him the accused party; while he added to the Ma'āzee, "All right, daddy, you shall have your own; put your confidence in God," and composedly motioned him back to his place.

Of the practical working of this kind of administration, and the character it often assumes, we shall be better able to speak, and my readers to judge, when we exchange the miniature for the full-size, Ḥamood for Ṭelāl.

Within the castle limits is enclosed the spacious Mesjid, or Mosque, constructed by order of 'Obeyd when on his first visit to the Djowf. But though large, it is a very simple and unadorned construction, being nothing more than a sort of portico, fourteen

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columns in length by three in depth; and since the space from pillar to pillar is about twelve feet, the entire edifice may be a hundred and eighty long, and nearly forty broad. The supports are of wood, the walls of earth, and the roof of flat rafters. In this meeting-place the stated Friday prayers are read, and the Khoṭbah or stereotyped sermon pronounced; all who can attend ought to do so; but Ḥamood takes little pains to enforce such regularity; and in absence of positive constraint, the orthodox injunctions to attendance have too feeble an echo in Djowf hearts to bring about even a tolerable assembly. The sultan's name, 'Abd-el-'Azeez Khan, is mentioned in the Khoṭbah, and that is all his Ottoman Majesty gets of subjection from the Djowf, or indeed throughout the dominions of Ṭelāl. Farther south the lord of the two continents and of the two seas, as he styles himself, is denied even the empty honour of name or recognition. It may be of some consolation to the Great Turk, should he know it, that the coin of his mint passes current here, and so does also the European; but in the centre and east he and his money are equally unrecognized.

Ten days of active intercourse and varied conversation had not gone by before we were masters of whatever information we more particularly desired at the Djowf. A rising civilization, contending against preceding and surrounding barbarism, a simple organization just put in place of absolute chaos, a tincture of Mahometanism, nay, even of Wahhabee fanaticism, thin-laid here and there over Arab materialism and indifference, a love of commerce and advancement, gaining ground, though slowly, over habits of spoil and rapine; much hospitality and little good faith, sufficient politeness and no morals, such was this province in the summer of 1862, and such we soon understood it to be. Meanwhile the glimpse we had already caught of the natives of Djebel Shomer, along with all that we heard of their country and of its ruler, led us to believe that whatever reward awaited our laborious curiosity must needs lie there. For of inner Nejed and 'Omān we as yet knew no more than most in Syria do, that is, very little. So that, in conclusion, all our desire was to quit the Djowf and advance to Ḥā'yel without loss of time.

Besides, all the good will of the people towards us and all

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their hospitality, could not free us from many annoyances and from serious privations. I have said that a wearisome fever had hung about me through the whole of our desert journey; and though comparative rest and an excellent climate, fresh grapes and running water, had at last made it quit its hold, my health stood in need, or at least I thought so, of something better than half-boiled meat, bad Djereeshah, and dates, even though the dates of Djowf. Now all agreed that at Ḥā'yel much else and of better quality was to be had in the way of provisions; our hopes were even flattered by a rumour of leavened bread. Moreover, continual haggling about the price of cloth and looking-glasses, innumerable little intrigues of our honoured customers to get our wares at the lowest value, and last, not least, the pretensions of the overbearing Ghāfil to regulate everything after his own will and pleasure, and for his own profit, could not but tire in the long run. I must add, though I regret to say it, that we had continually to see and hear such barefaced demonstrations of the grossest licentiousness of manners, to be almost or quite witnesses of so many domestic or undomestic intrigues, of such very loose conversation and vicious practice, that a Villiers might have been ashamed of it and a Wycherley disgusted.

Now all this we needs had to bear, without the smallest sign of amazement or displeasure, under penalty of belying our character of travelling Arab quacks or pedlars, who are naturally enough supposed to be fully inured to such society. The necessity of keeping up to the life this same character obliged us to appear, if possible, equally tenacious of gain, equally anxious not to be overreached in a bargain for coffee or physic, for cloth or attendance, as these good folks themselves were to overreach us. It was, in Scotch phrase, "a kittle part to play," and we could not but repeat to ourselves more than once, "This is the goodliest sport! would it were done."

Only in a passing way I would beg leave to deprecate the censure of any strait-laced reader who may be inclined to blame us for not having cut short improper tales with moral sentences, or edified the Djowf with a public sermon against vice and immorality. Nor does any other apology appear needful in our behalf, beyond that implied in certain old sayings as to not

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giving everything indiscriminately to the dogs, or casting pearls before such and such animals; as it must, I think, by this time be sufficiently clear that had we acted otherwise, both the adage itself and the consequences intimated as likely to ensue on its non-observance would have received a very thorough-going illustration, much to our own cost, and very little to the benefit of any one else.

With two families alone were we really at our ease, and in a manner at home; they were that of Ḍāfee, the same who along with Ghāfil came to meet us on our first arrival; and that of Sālim, a respectable, and, in his way, a literary old man, our near neighbour, and surrounded by a large family of fine strapping youths, all of them brought up more or less in the fear of God and in good example. Hither we used to retire when wearied of Ghāfil and his like, and pass a quiet hour in their Ḳ'hāwah, reciting or hearing Arab poetry, talking over the condition of the country and its future prospects, discussing points of morality, or commenting on the ways and fashions of the day. In either of these houses we were always sure of finding a hearty welcome and a reluctant farewell; and when afterwards far off in Ḥā'yel we continued to receive messages from Ḍāfee and Sālim to beg the realization of our ambiguous and indefinite promises of a future return.

However, in very truth, all, or almost all, were our friends at heart, and really meant us well, with a hearty desire to see us established among them. Proffers of partnership in business, nay, of marriage alliance, were not uncommon, and we had to defend ourselves more strenuously than Ulysses against the charms of more than one half-unveiled Calypso. Even Ghāfil was, to a certain extent, sincere; and it is a general feature in the Arab character, that the heartiest friendship and the most profuse generosity are nowise incompatible with a hard bargain or taking an advantage in affairs, of which this worthy's conduct was an excellent illustration.

But how were we to get on to Djebel Shomer? Between it and us lay the formidable sand-passes, called the Nefood, where Arab travellers, however bold, are in no hurry to adventure at any season of the year, and to pass which in the latter half of July might be reckoned almost as difficult an exploit, though

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for a somewhat contrary reason, as to sail through Behring's Straits in the month of January. In fact, from May to September few and far between are those who commit their beasts or themselves to the hazards of these burning sands. So that to all our enquiries on this subject, "wait till the dates be ripe" was the only answer, and these same dates were not to ripen till the rise of Soheyl, or Canopus, here coincident with the first week of September, and the beginning of the new year in popular computation.

"What to do?" as I once heard a Frenchman say, thus translating his "quoi faire?" a thought too literally into English. We did not well know, only we were terribly annoyed at the prospect of so long a delay, when Providence furnished us with a very favourable and unlooked-for opportunity of accomplishing our wishes.

Ṭelāl, soon after taking possession of the Djowf, had begun to use that province as a basis for extending his power thence over the whole of the surrounding desert and its indwellers, up to the Pilgrim road on the west and Syria on the north. The intervening space is, as we have already seen, occupied chiefly by the Sherarat Bedouins. A little farther on three powerful tribes, the Howeytat, the Tey'yāhha, and the Ru'ala, with some less important clans, like Bishr and Ma'āz, form an outer circle. Towards all these last the prudent ruler of Djebel Shomer contented himself with employing for the moment negotiation and intimidation, while against the Sherarat he directed an open attack, terminated the very year of our visit, 1862, by the submission of the 'Azzām, the last independent branch of the tribe. Just at this nick of time about a dozen chiefs of that clan arrived at the Djowf, on their way to Djebel Shomer, where they purposed to win Ṭelāl's good graces by tendering him their allegiance in his very capital. Ḥamood received them, and lodged them for several days, while they rested from their past fatigues, and prepared themselves for what yet lay before them. Some inhabitants of the Djowf, whose business required their presence at Ḥā'yel, were to join the party. Ḥamood sent for us, and gave us notice of this expedition, and on our declaring that we desired to profit by it, he handed us a scrap of paper, addressed to Ṭelāl himself, wherein he certified that we had

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duly paid the entrance fee exacted from strangers on their coming within the limits of Shomer rule, and that we were indeed respectable individuals, worthy of all good treatment. Now, as the toll thus levied on the frontiers amounts to only four shillings or somewhat less per individual, one cannot say that it is too much to pay in quittance of all custom-house duties or passport fees soever. Nor is anything else required or expected. We then, in presence of Ḥamood, struck our bargain with one of the band for a couple of camels, whose price, including all the services of their master as guide and companion for ten days of July travelling, was not extravagant either; it came up to just a hundred and ten piastres, equivalent to eighteen or nineteen shillings of English money.

We now laid in provisions for the way in dates and flour, repaired our water-skins, recovered what arrears of debt yet remained in our favour, and awaited the moment for starting; while our Djowf friends did their best to dissuade us from such a journey at such a season. As we could not of course explain to them our precise reasons for so ill-timed an adventure, our obstinacy in rejecting their well-meant advice seemed almost incomprehensible; till they ended by setting it down to our being "Sho'wam" or Damascenes; the inhabitants of Syria in general, and those of the capital yet more specially, being famous for headiness and the spirit of contradiction.

Many delays occurred, and it was not till the 18th of July, when the figs were fully ripe—a circumstance which furnished the natives of Djowf with new cause of wonder at our rushing away, in lieu of waiting like rational beings to enjoy the good things of the land—that we received our final "Son of Hodeirah, depart." This was intimated to us, not by a locust, but by a creature almost as queer, namely, our new conductor, a half-cracked Arab, neither peasant nor Bedouin, but something anomalous between the two, hight Djedey', and a native of the outskirts of Djebel Shomer, who darkened our door in the forenoon, and warned us to make our final packing up and get ready for starting the same day. Near the hour called by Arabs the 'Asr, that is, between three and four after midday, we took leave of our neighbours and mounted our camels, now much lighter laden than when we set out for Ma'ān, while Ḍāfee,

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'Oḳeyl (the eldest son of Ghāfil, for his father was just then absent from the Djowf on a hunting party), and some others of our acquaintance, accompanied us, according to Eastern custom, for a short way on the outset of our journey, heartily sorry to see us go, and with many invitations for a prompt return. "Insha' Allah," "if God wills," was our reply. What better could we say?

When once clear of the houses and gardens, Djedey' led us by a road skirting the southern side of the valley, till we arrived, before sunset, at the other or eastern extremity of the town. Here was the rendezvous agreed on by our companions; but they did not appear, and reason good, for they had right to a supper more under Ḥamood's roof, and were loth to lose it. So we halted and alighted alone. The chief of this quarter, which is above two miles distant from the castle, invited us to supper, and thence we returned to our baggage, there to sleep. To pass a summer's night in the open air on a soft sand-bed implies no great privation in these countries, nor is any one looked on as a hero for so doing.

Early next morning, while Venus yet shone like a drop of melted silver on the slaty blue, three of our party arrived and announced that the rest of our companions would soon come up. Encouraged by the news, we determined to march on without further tarrying, and ere sunrise we climbed the steep ascent of the southerly bank, whence we had a magnificent view of the whole length of the Djowf, its castle and towers, and groves and gardens, in the ruddy light of morning, and beyond the drear northern deserts stretching far away. We then dipped down the other side of the bordering hill, not again to see the Djowf till—who knows when?

Our way was now to the south-east, across a large plain varied with sand-mounds and covered with the Ghaḍa bush already described, so that our camels were much more inclined to crop pasture than to do their business in journeying ahead. About noon we halted near a large tuft of this shrub, at least ten feet high. We constructed a sort of cabin with boughs broken off the neighbouring plants and suitably arranged shed-wise, and thus passed the noon hours of intolerable heat till the whole band came in sight.

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They were barbarous, nay, almost savage fellows, like most Sherarat, whether chiefs or people; but they had been somewhat awed by the grandeurs of Ḥamood, and yet more so by the prospect of coming so soon before the terrible majesty of Ṭelāl himself; for such a prince, of however small account in European ideas, is, if I may be allowed the expression, a very God Almighty for a Bedouin. "Who is your God?" said an Arab traveller of my acquaintance to a Mesaleekh nomade, not far from Basra. "It was Fādee," answered the man, naming a powerful provincial governor of those lands, lately deceased; "but since his death I really do not know who is God at the present moment." My readers (who may, perhaps, remember a parallel saying in North Wales, namely, "When G— dies, Sir Watkin will succeed him") will, I hope, excuse the apparent irreverence of the story. But the Bedouin, poor fellow, was not irreverent in meaning, though incorrect in phrase.

Our Sherarat were all duly armed, and had put on their best suits of apparel, an equipment worthy of a scarecrow or an Irishman at a wake. Tattered red overalls; cloaks with more patches than original substance, or, worse yet, which opened large mouths to cry for patching, but had not got it; little broken tobacco pipes, and no trowsers soever (by the way, all genuine Arabs are *sans culottes*); faces meagre with habitual hunger, and black with dirt and weather stains;—such were the high-born chiefs of 'Azzām, on their way to the king's levee. Along with them were two Bedouins of the Shomer tribe, a degree better in guise and person than the Sherarat; and lastly, three men of Djowf, who looked almost like gentlemen among such ragamuffins. As to my comrade and myself, I trust that the reader will charitably suppose us the exquisites of the party. So we rode on together.

Next morning, a little after sunrise, we arrived at a white calcareous valley, girt round with low hills of marl and sand. Here was the famous Be'er Sheḳeeḳ, or "well of Sheḳeeḳ," whence we were to fill our water-skins, and that thoroughly, since no other source lay before us for four days' march amid the sand passes, up to the very verge of Djebel Shomer. This well is very deep, eighty feet at least, judging by the length of cord let down into it before reaching water; it is about three

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feet in breadth at its orifice, though widening out cistern-like below. Around it is a raised stone parapet, and the interior also is coated with masonry. Early writers mention it, and attest its ancient date, though nothing is known of the Sheḳeeḳ, who has given it name; if one asks the Arabs of the country, they will answer, "It is a work of the Christians;" and thus much indeed they say throughout the whole of Northern Arabia of every ancient and solid construction, be it what it may. Nor are they perhaps altogether in the wrong. For the principal clans of this neighbourhood, Ṭā'i, Ṭaghleb, and Tenookh, were, the latter entirely, and the two former in great part, of the Christian faith, nor that in a passing way, but for many centuries together.

Literature, monuments, and oral tradition, to which last the peculiar isolation of Arabia gives more value than it can well claim elsewhere, concur to show that long before Mahometanism took rise, Christianity was pretty widely diffused throughout Northern Arabia, not to mention the Nejrān of Yemen and Ḥaḍramaut; and no less that this country was then far more populous and enjoying a higher degree of prosperity and civilization than has since been its lot. The obvious inference, that Christianity as such is somehow connected with national well-being and advancement, has not escaped Arabian political economists, many of whom go so far as to draw from it a practical conclusion, whose expediency they readily acknowledge, though many and weighty obstacles might occur to its execution. Yet were it one day or other to find such execution, I for one should be not surprised, after what I have heard and seen in several localities, though, indeed, a similar event could only, it would seem, be brought about by indigenous action on native ground. For between Asiatics and Europeans in general there is but little sympathy and less amalgamation; a truth of which, to overstep for a moment the Arabian frontier, a marked example may be but too clearly read in the blood-stained annals of the late Indian rebellion. Besides, so little is the East and its inhabitants understood by the West, so few in the latter have of the former even that degree of knowledge which is the first necessary step to influence, that I do not see much probability of serious moral or religious change being brought about in Arabia or in any

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Asiatic elsewhere by European agency, unless indeed for the worse. But I find myself entering on a subject deeper than Be'er Shekeek itself, and, perhaps, scarcely less dark for many of my readers, so let us without delay emerge once more on the ordinary light of day and the occurrences of the surface.

For while we have been thus philosophizing, our Arabs, shouting, laughing, and pulling, have drawn up bucket after bucket, and filled the skins to bursting. Noon too has passed, and there is no time to lose; indeed, the stock of water now laid in will barely suffice its allotted period, especially in such a heat as this. So we all mount our camels, who have been wisely for once employed in storing a good provision of moisture in their complicated stomachs, and pursue our way. In less than half an hour we have cleared the chalky hollow, and enter at once on the Nefood. But here, travellers and readers, let us pause for a moment before encountering the severest fatigue of the whole journey.

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CHAPTER III

The Nefood and Djebel Shomer

Per correr miglior acqua alza le vele
Omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
Che lascia dietro a se mar si crudele.—*Dante*

NEFOOD — GENERAL IDEA OF THE DESERT — DESCRIPTION OF THE NEFOOD — CONDUCT OF THE BEDOUINS IN OUR PARTY — 'AALAM-ES-SA'AD — NEWS OF 'ONEYZAH — DISTANT VIEW OF DJEBEL DJOBBAH — BAND OF SHOMER HORSEMEN — DJOBBAH, ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD — THE GOVERNOR — 'AAKIL — SECOND NEFOOD — SAND HOLLOW AND WELLS — DJEBEL SHOMER — ḴENAH, LAḴEEṬAH, AND WOSEYṬAH — MEANING OF THE WORD "NEJED" — FIRST VIEW OF ḤĀ'YEL — THE PALACE, ITS BUILDINGS AND OUTER COURT — ATTENDANTS AND PEOPLE — SEYF THE CHAMBERLAIN — UNEXPECTED RECOGNITION — ṬELĀL'S ARSENAL; HIS Ḵ'HĀWAH — STATE PRISONERS — ṬELĀL'S OWN PERSON AND RETINUE — FIRST MEETING — SUPPER AND LODGINGS — OUR POSITION — 'ABD-EL-MAḤSIN, HIS HISTORY AND CHARACTER — HISTORY OF SHOMER — ITS EARLY POPULATION — CONDITION UNDER THE CALIPHS — SUBSEQUENT ANARCHY — 'ABD-ALLAH-EBN-RASHEED — HIS FIRST ATTEMPT AND ADVENTURES — HIS ENLISTMENT UNDER TURKEE-EBN-SA'OOD AT RIAḌ — EXPEDITION AGAINST ḤAṢA — 'ABD-ALLAH AND MESHĀREE — FOUNDATION OF THE NEW SHOMER DYNASTY — DESTRUCTION OF BEYT-'ALEE — REIGN OF 'ABD-ALLAH — PRINCIPAL EVENTS — WARS AND CONQUESTS — HE BEGINS THE NEW QUARTER AND PALACE OF ḤĀ'YEL — ṬELĀL SUCCEEDS — HIS CONQUESTS — INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICY — POSITION TOWARDS NEJED, THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT, EGYPT, AND PERSIA — PERSONAL QUALITIES AND FAMILY — AUDIENCE GIVEN TO THE 'AZZĀM SHERARAT.

DAUGHTERS of the Great Desert, to use an Arab phrase, the "Nefood," or sand passes, bear but too strong a family resemblance to their unamiable mother. What has been said elsewhere about their origin, their extent, their bearings, and their connection with the D'hana, or main sand waste of the south, may exempt me from here entering on a minute enarration of all their geographical details; let it suffice for the present that they are offshoots—inlets, one might not unsuitably call them—of the great ocean of sand that covers about one-third of the Peninsula, into whose central and comparatively fertile plateau they make deep inroads, nay, in some places

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almost intersect it. Their general character, of which the following pages will, I trust, give a tolerably correct idea, is also that of the Dahnā, or "red desert," itself. The Arabs, always prone to localize rather than generalize, count these sand-streams by scores, but they may all be referred to four principal courses, and he who would traverse the centre must necessarily cross two of them, perhaps even three, as we did.

The general type of Arabia is that of a central table-land, surrounded by a desert ring, sandy to the south, west, and east, and stony to the north. This outlying circle is in its turn girt by a line of mountains, low and sterile for the most, but attaining in Yemen and 'Omān considerable height, breadth, and fertility, while beyond these a narrow rim of coast is bordered by the sea. The surface of the midmost table-land equals somewhat less than one-half of the entire Peninsula, and its special demarcations are much affected, nay, often absolutely fixed, by the windings and in-runnings of the Nefood. If to these central high-lands, or Nejed, taking that word in its wider sense, we add the Djowf, the Ṭā'yif, Djebel 'Aaseer, Yemen, 'Omān, and Ḥasa, in short, whatever spots of fertility belong to the outer circles, we shall find that Arabia contains about two-thirds of cultivated, or at least of cultivable land, with a remaining third of irreclaimable desert, chiefly to the south. In most other directions the great blank spaces often left in maps of this country are quite as frequently indications of non-information as of real non-inhabitation. However, we have just now a strip, though fortunately only a strip, of pure unmitigated desert before us, after which better lands await us; and in this hope let us take courage with the old poet, who has kindly furnished me with a very appropriate heading to this chapter, and boldly enter the Nefood.

Much had we heard of them from Bedouins and countrymen, so that we had made up our minds to something very terrible and very impracticable. But the reality, especially in these dog-days, proved worse than aught heard or imagined.

We were now traversing an immense ocean of loose reddish sand, unlimited to the eye, and heaped up in enormous ridges running parallel to each other from north to south, undulation after undulation, each swell two or three hundred feet in average

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height, with slant sides and rounded crests furrowed in every direction by the capricious gales of the desert. In the depths between the traveller finds himself as it were imprisoned in a suffocating sand-pit, hemmed in by burning walls on every side; while at other times, while labouring up the slope, he overlooks what seems a vast sea of fire, swelling under a heavy monsoon wind, and ruffled by a cross-blast into little red-hot waves. Neither shelter nor rest for eye or limb amid torrents of light and heat poured from above on an answering glare reflected below.

> Tale scendeva l' eternale ardore;
> Onde la rena s' accendea com' esca
> Sotto focile, a doppiar lo dolore.

Add to this the weariness of long summer days of toiling—I might better say wading—through the loose and scorching soil, on drooping half-stupefied beasts, with few and interrupted hours of sleep at night, and no rest by day because no shelter, little to eat and less to drink, while the tepid and discoloured water in the skins rapidly diminishes even more by evaporation than by use, and a vertical sun, such a sun, strikes blazing down till clothes, baggage, and housings all take the smell of burning, and scarce permit the touch. "Were this eternal it were hell," said I to my comrade, who, drooping on his camel, gave no answer. The boisterous gaiety of the Bedouins was soon expended, and scattered, one to front, another behind, each pursued his way in a silence only broken by the angry snarl of the camels when struck, as they often were, to improve their pace.

It was on the 20th of July, a little after noon, that we had left Be'er Shekeek. The rest of that day and almost all night we journeyed on, for here three or four hours of repose at a time, supper included, was all that could be taken, since, if we did not reach the other side of the Nefood before our store of water was exhausted, we were lost for certain. Indeed, during the last twenty-four hours of these passes, to call them by their Arab name, we had only one hour of halt. Monday, the 21st of July, wore slowly away, most slowly it seemed, in the same labour, and amid the same unvarying scene. The loose sand hardly admits of any vegetation; even the Ghaḍa, which,

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like many other Euphorbias, seems hardly to require either earth or moisture for its sustenance, is here scant and miserably stunted; none can afford either shelter or pasture. Sometimes a sort of track appears, more often none; the moving surface has long since lost the traces of those who last crossed it.

About this time we noticed in the manner of our Sherarat companions, especially the younger ones, a certain insolent familiarity which put us much on our guard; for it is the custom of the Bedouin, when meditating plunder or treachery, to try the ground first in this fashion, and if he sees any signs of timidity or yielding in his intended victim, he takes it as a signal for proceeding further. The best plan in such cases is to put on a sour face and keep silence, with now and then a sharp reprimand by way of intimidation, and this often cows the savage just as a barking dog will shrink back under a steady look. Such was accordingly our conduct on the present occasion. We kept apart for hours at a time, and when alongside of the brigands, said little, and that little anything but friendly. Before long the more impudent appeared abashed or embarrassed and fell back, while an old 'Azzām chief, with a dry face like a withered crab-apple, pushed his dromedary up alongside of mine, under pretext of seeking medical advice, but in reality to make thus a proffer of friendliness and respect. Of course I met his advances with cold and sullen reserve; and hereon he began to apologize for the "Ghushm," "ill-bred clowns" of his party, assuring us that they had, however, no bad intention; that it was merely want of good education; that all were our brothers, our servants, &c. &c. We received his apology with an air of dignified importance, talked big of what we could or would do—very little, I fear, had matters been brought to the test—and then condescended to friendly chat and professional information, according to what his ailments might require or his intelligence admit.

But I afterwards learned from the Shomer Bedouins and from the men of Djowf, that the worthy Sherarats, supposing us to have amassed great wealth under Ḥamood's patronage, had seriously proposed to take the opportunity of this desert solitude to pillage us, and then leave us without water or camels to find our way out of the Nefood as best we might, that is, never.

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This little scheme they had communicated to the Shomer, hoping for their compliance and aid. But these last, more accustomed to the restraints of neighbouring rule, were afraid of the consequences; knowing, too, that Ṭelāl, if anyhow informed of such proceedings, might very possibly constitute himself our sole legatee, executor, and something more. Accordingly they refused to join, and the conspirators, who perceived from our manner that we already had some suspicion about their intentions, hastened to plaster matters over before we should be in a way to compromise their position at Ḥā'yel, by complaints of their meditated treachery.

If accompanied on a journey by Bedouins of a number less than or equal to your own, do as you think best—talk, joke, or keep silence, it is all one. But should they be many and you few, your only security is in a serious, steady, and rather sulky manner. Above all, never let them grow familiar; the proverb of giving an inch and taking an ell, must have been first made for these people.

Near sunset of the second day we came in sight of two lonely pyramidal peaks of dark granite, rising amid the sand-waves full in our way. "'Aalām-es-Sa'ād," the people call them, that is, "the signs of good luck," because they indicate that about one-third of the distance from Be'er-Sheḳeek to Djebel Shomer has been here passed. They stand out like islands, or rather like the rocks that start from the sea near the mouth of the Tagus, or like the Maldive group in the midst of the deep Indian Ocean. Their roots must be in the rocky base over which this upper layer of sand is strewn like the sea-water over its bed; we shall afterwards meet with similar phenomena in other desert spots. Here the under stratum is evidently of granite, often it is of basalt, sometimes it is calcareous. As to the average depth of the sand, I should estimate it at about four hundred feet, but it may not unfrequently be much more; at least I have met with hollows of full six hundred feet in perpendicular descent.

On we journeyed with the 'Aalām-es-Sa'ad looming dark before us, till when near midnight, so far as I could calculate by the stars, our only timepiece (and not a bad one in these clear skies), we passed close under the huge black masses of

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rock. Vainly had I flattered myself with a halt, were it but of half an hour, on the occasion. "On we swept," and not till the morning star rose close beneath the Pleiades was the word given to dismount. We tumbled rather than lay down on the ground; and before sunrise were once more on our way.

Soon we reached the summit of a gigantic sand ridge. "Look there," said Djedey' to us, and pointed forwards. Far off on the extreme horizon a blue cloud-like peak appeared, and another somewhat lower at its side. "Those are the mountains of Djobbah, and the nearest limits of Djebel Shomer," said our guide. Considering how loose the water-skins now flapped at the camel's side, my first thought was, "how are we to reach them?": all the band seemed much of the same mind, for they pushed on harder than before.

Near this we fell in with a small party of roving Bedouins, from the south; and by their conversation received our first news of the war then raging in the province of Ḳaseem, between the Wahhabee monarch and the partisans of 'Oneyzah,—war of which we shall afterwards see and hear our fill, and of which we shall learn also, though not till the following year and when on the very point of quitting Arabia, the disastrous conclusion.

Meanwhile with no slight difficulty we slid down the sand, descending from our elevated position, and at once lost sight, much to my regret, of the peaks of Djobbah; nor did we view them again till when close under their base, at the verge of the Nefood.

But the further we advanced the worse did the desert grow, more desolate, more hopeless in its barren waves; and at noon our band broke up into a thorough "sauve qui peut;" some had already exhausted their provisions, solid or liquid, and others were scarcely better furnished; every one goaded on his beast to reach the land of rest and safety. Djedey', my comrade, and myself, kept naturally together. On a sudden my attention was called to two or three sparrows, twittering under a shrub by the wayside. They were the first birds we had met with in this desert, and indicated our approach to cultivation and life. I bethought me of tales heard in childhood, at a comfortable fireside, how some far-wandering sailors, Columbus and his crew, if my memory serves me right, after days and months of dreary

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ocean, welcomed a bird that, borne from some yet undiscovered coast, first settled on their mast. My comrade fell a crying for very joy.

However we had yet a long course before us, and we ploughed on all that evening with scarce an hour's halt for a most scanty supper, and then all night up and down the undulating labyrinth, like men in an enchanter's circle, fated always to journey and never to advance. During the dark hours that immediately precede the dawn, we fell in with a band of some sixty horsemen, armed with matchlocks and lances; they formed part of a military expedition directed by order of Ṭelāl against the insolence of some Tey'yāhha Bedouins in the neighbourhood of Teymah.

The morning broke on us still toiling amid the sands. By daylight we saw our straggling companions like black specks here and there, one far ahead on a yet vigorous dromedary, another in the rear, dismounted, and urging his fallen beast to rise by plunging a knife a good inch deep into its haunches, a third lagging in the extreme distance. Every one for himself and God for us all; so we quickened our pace, looking anxiously before us for the hills of Djobbah, which could not now be distant. At noon we came in sight of them all at once, close on our right, wild and fantastic cliffs, rising sheer on the margin of the sand sea. We coasted them awhile, till at a turn the whole plain of Djobbah and its landscape opened on our view.

Here we had before us a cluster of black granite rocks, streaked with red, and about seven hundred feet, at a rough guess, in height; beyond them a large barren plain, partly white and encrusted with salt, partly green with tillage, and studded with palm groves, amongst which we could discern, not far off, the village of Djobbah, much resembling that of Djowf in arrangement and general appearance, only smaller, and without castle or tower. Beyond the valley glistened a second line of sand-hills, but less wild and desolate looking than those behind us, and far in the distance the main range of Djebel Shomer, a long purple sierra of most picturesque outline. Had we there and then mounted, as we afterwards did, the heights on our right, we should have also seen in the extreme south-west a green patch near the horizon, where cluster the palm

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plantations of Teymah, a place famed in Arab history, and by some supposed identical with the Teman of Holy Writ.

But for the moment a drop of fresh water and a shelter from the July sun was much more in our thoughts than all the Teymahs or Temans that ever existed. My camel, too, was not at his wits' end, for he never had any, but quite at the end of his legs, and hardly capable of advance, while I was myself too tired to urge him vigorously, and we took a fair hour to cross a narrow white strip of mingled salt and sand that yet intervened between us and the village.

Without its garden walls was pitched the very identical tent of our noble guide, and here his wife and family were anxiously awaiting their lord. Djedey' invited us—indeed he could not conformably with Shomer customs do less—to partake of his board and lodging, and we had no better course than to accept of both. So we let our camels fling themselves out like dead or dying alongside of the tabernacle, and entered to drink water mixed with sour milk, and to repose in the equivocal shade afforded by a single tattered covering of black goat's hair.

As evening drew on, Djedey', after giving his camels a well-earned draught from the garden well close by, invited us to pay a visit of ceremony to the local governor 'Aaḳil, a native of the village itself, but invested by Ṭelāl with vicarious authority. Now our friend's real object in calling in at this hour was to ensure a good supper, a thing which his own domicile could hardly have mustered. No dowager lady in Young's time or our own ever better deserved the satirical description of one who

> For her own breakfast will devise a scheme,
> Nor take her tea without a stratagem,

than does a Bedouin on parallel occasions. But you must substitute "supper" for "breakfast," and "dates" for "tea."

To the great delight of my comrade, whom the wretchedness of Djedey's hovel had led to anticipate a correspondingly miserable kitchen, our guide's manœuvres, the most intellectual of which a Bedouin is capable, met with deserved success. 'Aaḳil honoured us with the desired invitation; and the day closed in a good supper and a lively evening, during which

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Djedey' amused the whole party, by an uncouth dance with the coffee-making negro of the governor.

Next day we remained quiet; all glad of an interval of repose before the three days' journey which was to lead us to Ḥā'yel. Sometimes we climbed the heights to get a wider range of view, sometimes we strolled about the irregular village and talked with its inhabitants; and here first we met with unmistakable proofs of that deep half-idolizing attachment which the very name of Ṭelāl claims throughout the whole of Djebel Shomer. The quiet and settled state of all things here much contrasted with the half anarchical condition lately witnessed in the Djowf, and its war-seamed features. But the soil of Djobbah is poor, and its produce, though of the same kind with that we had left behind us, was in every way inferior to it. A curiosity of this valley is the capricious intermixture of salt and fresh water springs; they are often separated from each other by only a few yards of distance, and jotted seemingly at random all over the level.

The village itself so far resembles the Djowf, that I may be excused from entering on particular details regarding houses, gardens, and the like. I may here add, as an apology for brevity of description, while we pass by the different localities of Djebel Shomer, that they have almost all of them, whether large or small, much the same straggling appearance, the same mixture of dwellings and cultivation, of plantations and byeways, the same neglect of fortification and defence, which distinguishes them from the compact and well-guarded villages of Nejed Proper, and denotes habitual security; but also, alas! a total disregard for whatever is known in Europe by the name of symmetry, of which no true Arab of the north, whether sleeping or waking, had ever an idea. I say of the north, for in Ḥaṣa and 'Omān the laws of architectural proportion are known and observed, nor are they wholly absent from middle and southern Nejed.

About sunrise on the 25th of July we left Djobbah, crossed the valley to the south-east, and entered once more on a sandy desert, but a desert, as I have before hinted, of a milder and less inhospitable character than the dreary Nefood of two days back. Here the sand is thickly sprinkled with shrubs, and not

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altogether devoid of herbs and grass; while the undulations of the surface, running invariably from north to south, according to the general rule of that phenomenon, are much less deeply traced, though never wholly absent. We paced on all day; at nightfall we found ourselves on the edge of a vast funnel-like depression, where the sand recedes on all sides to leave bare the chalky bottom-strata below; here lights glimmering amid Bedouin tents in the depths of the valley invited us to try our chance of a preliminary supper before the repose of the night. We had, however, much ado to descend the cavity, so steep was the sandy slope; while its circular form and spiral marking would have reminded me of Edgar Poe's "Maelstroom," had I then been acquainted with that most authentic narrative. The Arabs to whom the watch-fires belonged were shepherds of the numerous Shomer tribe, whence the district, plain and mountain, takes its name. They welcomed us to a share of their supper; and a good dish of rice, instead of insipid samḥ or pasty Djereeshah, augured a certain approach to civilization. The limestone rock, at whose edge the tents were pitched, furnishes through its clefts a copious supply of water, and hence this hollow is a common resort for Bedouins and their beasts, like the wells of Magoowa' mentioned in a former chapter.

Such cavities are not uncommon amidst the sands, and occur in a very arbitrary manner, independent it would seem of the general laws of the desert; nor could I hit on any passable hypothesis to explain their formation. Their great size secures them against filling up; the pit in which we passed that night could not have measured much less than a quarter of a mile at its upper diameter, from rim to rim, and its depth was certainly about eight hundred feet. The huge undulations of sand, rolling apparently from west to east, and never failing in the Nefood of Arabia, may, if a hypothesis be permitted, find their cause in the diurnal rotation of the globe, and the imperfect communication of its rapid surface movement to the loose material here strewn over it. But this affords no clue to the capricious pits dug out by nature from time to time in these very wastes, and hollowed with an exactness of circular form truly surprising. I met them alike in the Nefood and Dahna, in the northern and southern desert; the phenomenon

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belongs to the vast aggregation of sand, not to any particular wind, or meteorological phase of a local nature. The parallel waves of the desert are also the same everywhere, on condition of a sufficient depth in the sand itself.

At break of day we resumed our march, and met with camels and camel-drivers in abundance, besides a few sheep and goats. Before noon we had got clear of the sandy patch, and entered in its stead on a firm gravelly soil. Here we enjoyed an hour of midday halt and shade in a natural cavern, hollowed out in a high granite rock; itself an advanced guard of the main body of Djebel Shomer. This mountain range now rose before us, wholly unlike any other that I had ever seen; a huge mass of crag and stone, piled up in fantastic disorder, with green valleys and habitations intervening. The sun had not yet set when we reached the pretty village of Ḳenah, amid groves and waters, no more, however, running streams like those of Djowf, but an artificial irrigation by means of wells and buckets. At some distance from the houses stood a cluster of three or four large over-shadowing trees, objects of peasant veneration here, as once in Palestine. The welcome of the inhabitants, when we dismounted at their doors, was hearty and hospitable, nay, even polite and considerate; and a good meal, with a dish of fresh grapes for dessert, was soon set before us in the verandah of a pleasant little house, much reminding me of an English farm-cottage, whither the good man of the dwelling had invited us for the evening. All expressed great desire to profit by our medical skill; and on our reply that we could not conveniently open shop except at the capital Ḥā'yel, several announced their resolution to visit us there; and subsequently kept their word, though at the cost of about twenty-four miles of journey.

We rose very early. Our path, well tracked and trodden, now lay between ridges of precipitous rock, rising abruptly from a level and grassy plain; sometimes the road was sunk in deep gorges, sometimes it opened out on wider spaces, where trees and villagers appeared, while the number of wayfarers, on foot or mounted, single or in bands, still increased as we drew nearer to the capital. About noon we came opposite to a large village called Laḳeeṭah, where we turned aside to rest a little during the heat in the house of a wealthy inhabitant. There was an air of

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newness and security about the dwellings and plantations hardly to be found now-a-days in any other part of Arabia, 'Omān alone excepted. I may add also the great frequency of young trees and ground newly enclosed, a cheerful sight, yet further enhanced by the total absence of ruins, so common in the East, and above all in the Ottoman dominions; hence the general effect produced by Djebel Shomer, when contrasted with most other provinces or kingdoms around, near and far, is that of a newly coined piece, in all its sharpness and shine, amid a dingy heap of defaced currency. It is a fresh creation, and shows what Arabia might be under better rule than it enjoys for the most part: an inference rendered the more conclusive by the fact that in natural and unaided fertility Djebel Shomer is perhaps the least favoured district in the entire central peninsula.

Laḳeeṭah contains about four hundred houses, and in consequence two thousand four hundred inhabitants, more or less, according to the broad computation common in these countries, which allows six or seven individuals for each domicile. After remounting and riding a little further on, we saw, not far from the main road, the larger village of Woseyṭah, whither Djedey' would fain have turned aside for the evening. But we were now thoroughly impatient to be at our journey's end, and stoutly declared that we would not, on any consideration, halt short of Ḥā'yel itself.

We were here close under the backbone of Djebel Shomer, whose reddish crags rose in the strangest forms on our right and left, while a narrow cleft down to the plain-level below gave opening to the capital. Very hard to bring an army through this against the will of the inhabitants, thought I; fifty resolute men could, in fact, hold the pass against thousands; nor is there any other approach to Ḥā'yel from the northern direction. The town is situated near the very centre of the mountains; it was as yet entirely concealed from our view by the windings of the road amid huge piles of rock. Meanwhile from Djobbah to Ḥā'yel, the whole plain gradually rises, running up between the sierras, whose course from north-east to south-west crosses two-thirds of the upper peninsula, and forms the outwork of the central high country. Hence the name of Nejed, literally "highland," in contradistinction to the coast

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and the outlying provinces of lesser elevation. Hence, too, in popular phrase, the word, "ṭalaa'," or "went up," is applied to those who journey from the circumference inland; while "anḥaḍer," that is, "went down," is said of travellers whose way lies from the centre to Mecca, Ḥaṣa, the Djowf, and so forth.

I must insert a line or two of explanation regarding the denomination "Nejed" itself. It is commonly enough applied to the whole space included between Djebel Shomer on the north and the great desert to the south, from the extreme range of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ on the east to the neighbourhood of the Turkish pilgrim-road, or Derb-el-Ḥajj, on the west. However, this central district, forming a huge parallelogram, placed almost diagonally across the midmost of Arabia, from north-east-by-east to south-west-by-west, as a glance at the map may show, is again subdivided by the natives of the country into the Nejed-el-'aalā, or Upper Nejed, and the Nejed-el-owṭā, or Lower Nejed, a distinction of which more hereafter, while Djebel Shomer is generally considered as a sort of appendage to Nejed, rather than as belonging to that district itself. But the Djowf is always excluded by the Arabs from the catalogue of upland provinces, though strangers sometimes admit it also to the title of Nejed, by an error on their part, since it is a solitary oasis, and a door to highland or inner Arabia — not, in any strict sense, a portion of it.

I trust that these topographical details, and more are yet to come, may perhaps lend an aid to rectify in some degree the current but too often erroneous nomenclature which has crept into maps of the region; not that a name is in itself of any great importance, but that mistakes on these points give rise at times to incorrect ideas, and thus the whole picture of Arabia in all its bearings comes to be distorted.

The sun was yet two hours' distance above the western horizon, when we threaded the narrow and winding defile, till we arrived at its further end. Here we found ourselves on the verge of a large plain, many miles in length and breadth, and girt on every side by a high mountain rampart, while right in front of us, at scarce a quarter of an hour's march, lay the town of Ḥā'yel surrounded by fortifications of about twenty feet in

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height, with bastion-towers, some round, some square, and large folding gates at intervals; it offered the same show of freshness and even of something like irregular elegance that had before struck us in the villages on our way. But this was a full-grown town, and its area might readily hold three hundred thousand inhabitants or more, were its streets and houses close packed like those of Brussels or Paris. But the number of citizens does not, in fact, exceed twenty or twenty-two thousand, thanks to the many large gardens, open spaces, and even plantations, included within the outer walls, while the immense palace of the monarch alone, with its pleasure grounds annexed, occupies about one-tenth of the entire city. Our attention was attracted by a lofty tower, some seventy feet in height, of recent construction and oval form, belonging to the royal residence. The plain all around the town is studded with isolated houses and gardens, the property of wealthy citizens, or of members of the kingly family, and on the far-off skirts of the plain appear the groves belonging to Kafar, 'Adwah, and other villages, placed at the openings of the mountain gorges that conduct to the capital. The town walls and buildings shone yellow in the evening sun, and the whole prospect was one of thriving security, delightful to view, though wanting in the peculiar luxuriance of vegetation offered by the valley of Djowf. A few Bédouin tents lay clustered close by the ramparts, and the great number of horsemen, footmen, camels, asses, peasants, townsmen, boys, women, and other like, all passing to and fro on their various avocations, gave cheerfulness and animation to the scene.

We crossed the plain, and made for the town gate opposite the castle; next, with no little difficulty, prevailed on our camels to pace the high-walled street, and at last arrived at the open space in front of the palace. It was yet an hour before sunset, or rather more; the business of the day was over in Ḥā'yel, and the outer courtyard where we now stood was crowded with loiterers of all shapes and sizes. We made our camels kneel down close by the palace gate, alongside of some forty or fifty others, and then stepped back to repose our very weary limbs on a stone bench opposite the portal, and waited what might next occur.

But before we verify the Arab proverb which attributes ill-

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luck to occurrences of the evening, let us cast around a look on this strange scene, strange, that is, to a foreigner, but completely in harmony with the genius of the country and people. Before us are the long earth walls of the palace, enormously thick, and about thirty feet in height, pierced near the summit with loopholes rather than windows, and occupying an extent of four hundred and fifty to five hundred feet in length. The principal gate is placed, according to approved custom, in a receding angle of the wall, and flanked by high square towers; semicircular bastions advance too from space to space all the length of the front. Immediately under the shadow of the wall runs a long bench of beaten earth and stone; we observe, too, about half way in its line, a sort of throne or raised seat, to be occupied by the monarch's most sacred person when giving public audience. The palace of Meta'ab, the king's second brother, is included in the same mass of building, but has its own entrance apart.

On the other side of the open area, that is, where we are now seated, stands a long range of warehouses and small apartments, each under lock and key. Here is stowed away the merchandize which belongs exclusively to the government? here, too, Ṭelāl, as a general rule, lodges his guests; for no stranger, be he who he may, is ever allowed to sleep within the palace walls. In the same direction, but farther up the area, and opposite to the residence of Meta'ab, is the large public mosque, or Djāmi'a'. At its angle the court opens out into the new market-place, which we will visit to-morrow. On the other side of this opening, but on the same line as the Djāmia, rises the sumptuous house of Zāmil, the chief treasurer and prime minister too. I do not say that the union of such offices in one person is exactly constitutional, but it seems to work here very well, besides simplifying government salaries, a positive advantage in poor Arab states. Lastly, a tall gate ends the area, and gives admittance into the more plebeian High Street, which here crosses at right angles, and leads up and down through the whole breadth of the town.

At the opposite extremity of this great courtyard, and communicating with a second gate through which we had just passed, enters another large street, leading out at some distance on the plain. Towards this end of the enclosure, and still opposite the

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palace itself, are the dwellings of two or three principal officers of the household; and lastly, a low door, in all "the pride that apes humility," gives entrance to the abode and spacious gardens of 'Obeyd, the present king's uncle, a very important character he, and already mentioned on occasion of his first expedition against the Djowf. Enough of him for the present; he will end by becoming a personal and even too intimate an acquaintance.

About the portal, some standing, some seated on the stone platform near its entrance, are several of the subordinate officers in waiting. These men are neatly and, all things considered, cleanly clothed, in white robes and black cloaks, much like Ḥamood, whose dress we have not long since described; long silver-tipped wands, strongly resembling those wielded by that venerable class of men whom mortals call Beadles, distinguish those among them who are charged with household employment; but the greater number are of a military character, and wear silver-hilted swords. The neighbouring benches on one side of the court and on the other are thronged by a crowd of the better sort of citizens, come from their shops or houses to hear and chat over news, and to take the evening air. Few of them, save those of noble birth, wear arms; but their general appearance is every way decorous. Some, in plainer clothes, have a peculiar and puritanical look, they will be from Nejed; a slightly rakish air, on the contrary, points out the man of Ḳaseem. In the middle of the courtyard itself, or seated among the well-dressed citizens with true Arab fraternity and equality, are not a few whose dingy garments and coarse features bespeak them of mechanical profession, or at least poor. Some Bedouins are mixed with the rest, aud may at once be known by their scanty ragged dress and cringing attitude. The lowest in the nomade scale here present are the uncouth Sherarat, and the still more uncouth Ṣolibah; while the Shomer, near akin to many of the townsmen, and somewhat polished by more frequent intercourse with the civilized world, may stand highest in this category.

At our first appearance a slight stir takes place. The customary salutations are given and returned by those nearest at hand; and a small knot of inquisitive idlers, come up to see what and whence we are, soon thickens into a dense circle. Many

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questions are asked, first of our conductor, Djedey', and next of ourselves; our answers are tolerably laconic. Meanwhile a thin middle-sized individual, whose countenance bears the type of smiling urbanity and precise etiquette, befitting his office at court, approaches us. His neat and simple dress, the long silver-circled staff in his hand, his respectful salutation, his politely important manner, all denote him one of the palace retinue. It is Seyf, the court chamberlain, whose special duty is the reception and presentation of strangers. We rise to receive him, and are greeted with a decorous, "Peace be with you, brothers," in the fullness of every inflection and accent that the most scrupulous grammarian could desire. We return an equally Priscianic salutation. "Whence have you come? may good attend you!" is the first question. Of course we declare ourselves physicians from Syria, for our bulkier wares had been disposed of in the Djowf, and we were now resolved to depend on medical practice alone. "And what do you desire here in our town? may God grant you success!" says Seyf. "We desire the favour of God most high, and, secondly, that of Ṭelāl," is our answer, conforming our style to the correctest formulas of the country, which we had already begun to pick up. Whereupon Seyf, looking very sweet the while, begins, as in duty bound, a little encomium on his master's generosity and other excellent qualities, and assures us that we have exactly reached right quarters.

But alas! while my comrade and myself were exchanging side-glances of mutual felicitation at such fair beginnings, Nemesis suddenly awoke to claim her due, and the serenity of our horizon was at once overcast by an unexpected and most unwelcome cloud. My readers are doubtless already aware that nothing was of higher importance for us than the most absolute incognito, above all in whatever regarded European origin and character. In fact, were we once known for Europeans, all intimate access and sincerity of intercourse with the people of the land would have been irretrievably lost, and our onward progress to Nejed rendered totally impossible. These were the very least inconveniences that could follow such a detection; others much more disagreeable might also be well apprehended. Now thus far nothing had occurred capable of

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exciting serious suspicion, no one had recognized us, or pretended to recognize. We, too, on our part, had thought that Gaza, Ma'ān, and perhaps the Djowf, were the only localities where this kind of recognition had to be feared. But we had reckoned without our host; the first real danger was reserved for Ḥā'yel, within the very limits of Nejed, and with all the desert-belt between us and our old acquaintances.

For while Seyf was running through the preliminaries of his politeness, I saw to my horror amid the circle of bystanders a figure, a face well known to me scarce six months before in Damascus, and well known to many others also, now merchant, now trader, now post-contractor, shrewd, enterprising and active, though nigh fifty years of age, a zealous Maḥometan, yet intimate with many Europeans of considerable standing in Syria and Bagdad—one, in short, accustomed to all kinds of men, and not to be easily imposed on by any.

While I involuntarily stared dismay on my friend, and yet doubted if it could possibly be he, all incertitude was dispelled by his cheerful salutation, in the confidential tone of an old acquaintance, followed by wondering enquiries as to what wind had blown me hither, and what I meant to do here in Ḥā'yel.

Wishing him most heartily—somewhere else, I had nothing for it but to "fix a vacant stare," to give a formal return of greeting, and then silence.

But misfortunes never come single. While I was thus on my defensive against so dangerous an antagonist in the person of my free and easy friend, lo! a tall, sinister-featured individual comes up, clad in the dress of an inhabitant of Ḳaseem, and abruptly breaks in with, "And I too have seen him at Damascus," naming at the same time the place and date of the meeting, and specifying exactly the circumstances most calculated to set me down for a European bone and marrow, body and soul.

Had he really met me as he said? I cannot precisely say; the place he mentioned was one whither men, half spies, half travellers, and whole intriguers from the interior districts, nay, even from Nejed itself, not unfrequently resort; and as I myself was conscious of having paid more than one visit there, my officious interlocutor might very possibly have been one of those present on some such occasion. So that although I did not now

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recognize him in particular, there was a strong intrinsic probability in favour of his ill-timed veracity; and his thus coming in to support the first witness in his assertions, rendered my predicament, already unsafe, yet worse.

But ere I could frame an answer or resolve what course to hold, up came a third, who, by overshooting the mark, put the game into our hands. He too salaams me as an old friend, and then, turning to those around, now worked up to a most extraordinary pitch of amazed curiosity, says, "And I also know him perfectly well, I have often met him at Cairo, where he lives in great wealth in a large house near the Ḳaṣr-el-'Eynee; his name is 'Abd-es-Ṣaleeb, he is married, and has a very beautiful daughter, who rides an expensive horse," &c. &c. &c.

Here at last was a pure invention or mistake (for I know not which it was) that admitted of a flat denial. "Aṣlaḥek' Allah," "May God set you right," said I; "never did I live at Cairo, nor have I the blessing of any horse-riding young ladies for daughters." Then, looking very hard at my second detector, towards whom I had all the right of doubt, "I do not remember having ever seen you; think well as to what you say; many a man besides myself has a reddish beard and straw-coloured mustachios," taking pains however not to seem particularly "careful to answer him in this matter," but as if merely questioning the precise identity. But for the first of the trio I knew not what to do or to reply, so I continued to look at him with a killing air of inquisitive stupidity, as though not fully understanding his meaning.

But Seyf, who had appeared at first somewhat staggered by this sudden downpour of recognition, was now reassured by the discomfiture of the third witness, and came to the convenient conclusion that the two others were no better worthy of credit. "Never mind them," exclaimed he, addressing himself to us, "they are talkative liars, mere gossipers; let them alone, they do not deserve attention; come along with me to the Ḳ'hāwah in the palace, and rest yourselves." Then turning to my poor Damascene friend, whose only wrong was to have been over much in the right, he sharply chid him, and next the rest, and led us off, most glad to follow the leader, through the narrow and dark portal into the royal residence.

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After passing between files of wandsmen and swordsmen, Arabs and negroes, we entered on a small court, where, under a shed, was arranged the dreaded artillery of Ṭelāl, nine pieces in all, of different calibre, four only mounted on gun-carriages, and out of the four just three serviceable. Of this last number were the two large iron mortars that had played so important a part in the siege of the Djowf. The third, a long brass field-piece, bore the date of 1810, with a very English "G. R." (illegible, I need hardly say, for its actual possessors) embossed above. The other guns were all more or less injured, and quite unfit for duty, but this was a circumstance unknown to the Arabs around, and perhaps to Ṭelāl himself, and "all the nine" military muses seemed to impress equal awe on the minds of the beholders. This tremendous battery had been in part furnished by the Wahhabee monarch to 'Abd-Allah, father and predecessor of Ṭelāl, and in part procured by the agents of the present reign at the seaport of Koweyt on the Persian Gulf, an active and thriving little town, of whose doings with the Wahhabees on the south, and with Ṭelāl on the west, we shall see more hereafter.

We traversed this court, and entered a second, one side of which was formed by the ladies' apartments, duly separated by a high blind wall from profane intercourse, and the other by the Ḳ'hāwah or guest-room. This apartment was about eighty feet in length by thirty or more in breadth, and of height proportionate; the beams of the flat roof (for vaulting is here unknown) rested on six large round columns in a central row. It was of evidently recent construction, well lighted, and perfectly neat. The coffee furnace was of dimensions proportionate to those of the hall, and by its side was seated a sturdy negro, who rose at our approach. A few guests from the neighbouring provinces, and some of the court attendants, were present. Two men, whose feet were loosely chained with heavy iron links, shuffled about the hall. They were state prisoners, and condemned to incarceration at his Majesty's royal will and pleasure, but were permitted the entrance of the Ḳ'hāwah by way of recreation; a curious instance of the humanity of the Arab character, even in the infliction of punishment. Imagine how the appearance of a convicted rebel in the saloons of the

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Tuileries or of Buckingham Palace would surprise the court! One of these men was a chieflet of Djowf, brought hither by Ṭelāl on his conquest of that district, and not yet liberated, nor likely to be so in a hurry. But neither he nor his companion looked particularly miserable.

Here we remained whilst coffee was, as wont, prepared and served. Seyf, who had left us awhile, now came back to say that Ṭelāl would soon return from his afternoon walk in a garden where he had been taking the air, and that if we would pass into the outer court we should then and there have the opportunity of paying him our introductory respects. He added that we should afterwards find our supper ready, and be provided also with good lodgings for the night; finally, that the Ḳ'hāwah and what it contained were always at our disposition so long as we should honour Ḥā'yel by our presence.

We rose accordingly and returned with Seyf to the outside area. It was fuller than ever, on account of the expected appearance of the monarch. A few minutes later we saw a crowd approach from the upper extremity of the place, namely, that towards the market. When the new-comers drew near, we saw them to be almost exclusively armed men, with some of the more important-looking citizens, but all on foot. In the midst of this circle, though detached from those around them, slowly advanced three personages, whose dress and deportment, together with the respectful distance observed by the rest, announced superior rank. "Here comes Ṭelāl," said Seyf, in an undertone.

The midmost figure was in fact that of the prince himself. Short of stature, broad-shouldered, and strongly built, of a very dusky complexion, with long black hair, dark and piercing eyes, and a countenance rather severe than open, Ṭelāl might readily be supposed above forty years in age, though he is in fact thirty-seven or thirty-eight at most. His step was measured, his demeanour grave and somewhat haughty. His dress, a long robe of Cachemire shawl, covered the white Arab shirt, and over all he wore a delicately worked cloak of camel's hair from 'Omān, a great rarity and highly valued in this part of Arabia. His head was adorned by a broidered handkerchief, in which silk and gold thread had not been spared, and girt by a

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broad band of camel's hair entwined with red silk, the manufacture of Meshid 'Alee. A gold-mounted sword hung by his side, and his dress was perfumed with musk in a degree better adapted to Arab than to European nostrils. His glance never rested for a moment; sometimes it turned on his nearer companions, sometimes on the crowd; I have seldom seen so truly an "eagle eye" in rapidity and in brilliancy.

By his side walked a tall thin individual clad in garments of somewhat less costly material, but of gayer colours and embroidery than those of the king himself. His face announced unusual intelligence and courtly politeness; his sword was not, however, adorned with gold, the exclusive privilege of the royal family, but with silver only.

This was Zāmil, the treasurer and prime minister—sole minister, indeed, of the autocrat. Raised from beggary by 'Abd-Allah the late king, who had seen in the ragged orphan signs of rare capacity, he continued to merit the uninterrupted favour of his patron, and after his death had become equally, or yet more dear to Ṭelāl, who raised him from post to post till he at last occupied the highest position in the kingdom after the monarch himself. Faithful to his master, and placed by his plebeian extraction beyond reach of rival family jealousy, his even and amiable temper had made him eminently popular without the palace, and as cherished by his master within, while his extraordinary application to business, joined with a ready but calm mind, and the great services he rendered the state in his double duty, merited, in the opinion of all, those personal riches of which he made a very free and munificent display.

Of the demurely smiling 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, the second companion of the king's evening walk, I will say nothing for the moment; we shall have him before long for a very intimate acquaintance and a steady friend.

Every one stood up as Ṭelāl drew nigh. Seyf gave us a sign to follow him, made way through the crowd, and saluted his sovereign with the authorized formula of "Peace be with you, O the Protected of God!"—no worse a title than "Protector" anyhow, and more modest. Ṭelāl at once cast on us a penetrating glance, and addressed a question in a low voice to Seyf, whose answer was in the same tone. The prince then looked again

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towards us, but with a friendlier expression of face. We approached and touched his open hand, repeating the same salutation as that used by Seyf. No bow, hand-kissing, or other ceremony is customary on these occasions. Ṭelāl returned our greeting, and then, without a word more to us, whispered a moment to Seyf, and passed on through the palace gate.

"He will give you a private audience to-morrow," said Seyf, "and I will take care that you have notice of it in due time; meanwhile come to supper." The sun had already set when we re-entered the palace. This time, after passing the arsenal, we turned aside into a large square court, distinct from the former, and surrounded by an open verandah spread with mats. Two large ostriches, presents offered to Ṭelāl by some chiefs of the Ṣolibah tribe, strutted about the enclosure, and afforded much amusement to the negro-boys and scullions of the establishment. Seyf conducted us to the further side of the court, where we seated ourselves under the portico.

Hither some black slaves immediately brought the supper; the "pièce de résistance" was, as usual, a huge dish of rice and boiled meat, with some thin cakes of unleavened bread and dates, and small onions with chopped gourds intermixed. The cookery was better than what we had heretofore tasted, though it would, perhaps, have hardly passed muster with a Vatel. We made a hearty meal, took coffee in the Ḳ'hāwah, and then returned to sit awhile and smoke our pipes in the open air. Needs not say how lovely are the summer evenings, how cool the breeze, how pure the sky, in these mountainous districts.

Seyf, on his side, got our night quarters ready, and, by his orders, one of the king's magazines (I have already mentioned them) had been emptied, swept, and matted for our reception. My readers are, I should think, sufficiently acquainted with eastern customs to know that neither chairs nor tables, tubs nor washhand basins, can reasonably be expected. We entered our lodgings, closed and locked the outer door, and then fell into deep consultation and weighty debate.

What were we to say to Ṭelāl on our morrow's meeting? what line of conduct to hold? how obviate suspicion? Such and similar topics were now long and carefully discussed. A reception evidently favourable, and good promises for the future,

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were so far encouraging signs. But the untimely encounter of our Damascene acquaintances, though patched up for the moment, could not but have produced a certain sinister effect on the public mind. Besides, Ṭelāl was, if fame said true, the most discerning of men, and certainly he looked it. Might it not, all things considered, be the better plan to let him at once, though privately, into our full confidence, and thus prevent the dangers of an afterhand detection? But again, we did not, we could not, as yet precisely know what might be his feelings towards foreigners, Europeans especially. All we had for certain was, that his kingdom had been originally founded by Wahhabee influence and support; but whether he himself was an independent sovereign or merely a vassal of Nejed, was a point far from clear to us amid the contradictory statements given on the matter thus far. With the extreme aversion of the Wahhabees for Europeans we were already acquainted: now Ṭelāl might perhaps be of their way of thinking. On the other hand, I could not but suspect the existence of something like that rival jealousy and ill-feeling between him and his Nejdean neighbours, which, as we ere long found out, was really the case. But the ground was at best uncertain, and might prove a quicksand.

Our final conclusion was to be extremely cautious, to stick close by our original disguise, and to give Ṭelāl those answers, and those only, which might serve to fix his ideas on Syria and on our medical profession. Perhaps had we then known all that we discovered some days later, our determination might have taken a different turn. But for our then circumstances and degree of information, I do not think that we resolved or acted unwisely; much less, I am sure, will my readers censure the corollary of our conference, which was to betake ourselves to a sound and early sleep.

While we are thus, to borrow Madge Wildfire's phrase, "in the land of Nod," it may perhaps be well, instead of recounting our dreams, to gratify the curiosity of those who would desire to learn whether we had any further encounter with our unwelcome friends from the north, and what was the sequel of their history. Be it known, then, that the first and worthiest of the two, the trader-post-contractor, had been so utterly

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puzzled by our chilling "cut," and subsequently by the rebukes he received from Seyf and others, that he ended in doubting his own eyes, and concluded that he must have made some strange mistake about our identity, or perhaps even his own; for, on the third day, when we once more came across each other in the street, he began a confused discourse much like that of the old woman in the ballad, "Oh dear me, it is not I," and made such very humble apologies for his past conduct, that I felt half disposed out of sheer pity to set his mind at ease with a "no mistake at all, old fellow, you were perfectly in the right." But prudence would not permit of this extra kindness; and besides, his public abjuration produced the best imaginable effect on those present, so I left him to his regrets, in which he may be plunged up to the present day, for aught I know. The following morning he left Ḥā'yel, nor have I since seen him anywhere.

For the man of Ḳaseem, his stay in this capital was yet shorter, and the next day saw him on his way home, nor did we again meet him; thus his tale, true or not, fell to the ground for want of repetition and confirmation.

As to the third, who had so obligingly set me up with house and family, he was a citizen of the town itself, and we had in consequence frequent interviews during the following weeks. But he readily gave up his unfounded pretensions to previous intimacy, and declared before all that he had mistaken his man. And thus the triple cloud, fraught with distrust and danger, passed away without further ill consequences, at least of a direct nature. But the morrow's sun is up, and we must up with him.

Our door was yet unopened, when a low rap announces a visitor. My companion undoes the bolt with a "samm'," equivalent on these occasions to "come in."

It is 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, the same whom we had seen the evening before as companion of Ṭelāl. He enters with a "hope I don't intrude" air, and begins by excusing himself for breaking in on us so early, asks after our health, trusts that we are somewhat refreshed from the fatigues of our journey; in short, makes no less display of politeness, though without any overdoing or affectation soever, than a French marquis of the old school could to guests newly arrived at his château. He then proceeds

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to enquiries about our road hither, how we had fared on the way, laments over the coarse manners and ill breeding of Bedouins, and the heat of the desert. Next he shows a great desire to be instructed in medicine, adding that he is not altogether ignorant of the healing art, and in a word directs his whole conversation so as to make us feel perfectly at home, and thus proceeds to sound us on the purport of our visit to Ḥā'yel, and who we really were.

His appearance was certainly much in his favour, and one that inspired confidence, or even familiarity. He could not have been under fifty, but bore his years well; his complexion equal in fairness to that of most Italians, his eye large and intelligent, his features regular; in youth he must have been positively handsome; his person was slender and a little bent by advancing age; his dress extremely neat, though unadorned; a plain wand in his hand bespoke his pacific and unmilitary turn; in short, he had the look of a scientific or literary courtier, perhaps an author, certainly a gentleman. A curious half-smile, but partially disguised by the ceremonious gravity of a first visit, showed him to be no enemy to a joke, while it tempered the thoughtful expression of his large forehead and meaning eye.

Such was 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, the intimate friend and inseparable companion of the prince. He belonged to the ancient and noble family of 'Aleyyān, chiefs of the town and district of Bereydah in Ḳaseem. There he had once enjoyed the confidence of his own fellow-citizens, and the boon fellowship of Khursheed Basha the Egyptian governor, during the period that this latter held Ḳaseem before the final re-establishment of the Wahhabee dynasty. Avoiding any open part in political affairs, and devoting himself in appearance to literature and society, he was, in fact, the deepest intriguer of the province, and guided all the machinations of his relatives to deliver his country from foreign occupation. How this was at last brought about, and the part borne by the Wahhabee prince, Feyṣul, in the execution of the scheme, belongs to the history of the Nejdean dynasty, and we must reserve it accordingly for a future chapter. But when a few years later 'Abd-el-Maḥsin found that Feyṣul had only concurred in freeing them from the tyranny of Egypt in order the better to subject them to his own, he became once

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more the active though secret agent of his powerful family in opposing the progress of Wahhabee preponderance and rule. At last came the ruin of the 'Aleyyān family, consummated by one of the blackest acts of perfidy that stain the annals of central Arabia. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin escaped the first fury of the massacre that destroyed most of his relatives, but was involved in the proscription which followed immediately after, and had to flee for his life. After some months of concealment on the outskirts of the province, finding that no hope was left in his native country, he took refuge with Ṭelāl, and had now lived for about ten years in the palace of the Shomer prince, first a guest, then a friend and favourite, welcomed in moments of relaxation on account of his gaiety, his natural elegance, and his extensive knowledge of Arab history and anecdote; but prized in more serious hours for his shrewd advice and wise counsel. When on our way home a year later my companion and myself beguiled the long hours of horseback in the plains of Mosool or the hills of Orfah by passing in review the events of our Arabian journey, we readily agreed that from Gaza to Rās-el-Ḥadd we had not met with any one superior, or perhaps equal, in natural endowments and cultivated intellect to 'Abd-el-Maḥsin 'Aleyyān.

Hardly had he entered on conversation than we guessed, and rightly guessed, that he had been sent by Ṭelāl in a preparatory way to the audience fixed by the king for a few hours later. We were accordingly on our guard, and stuck perseveringly to Damascus, Syria, and doctoring. On any other topics started by our friend while beating the bush, we gave very off-hand answers, implying that these things did not regard us, and to a few hesitating questions about Egypt, and even about Europe, we put on an appearance of great ignorance and unconcern.

Meanwhile it was our turn to find out everything possible about Ṭelāl and his real position, especially in what regarded the Wahhabee dynasty, and his own fashion of government. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin's answers were naturally cautious and guarded enough; yet we were able this very morning to discover much that we had been previously ignorant of. My readers may think this a suitable place, before we go any further in our narrative, to put together these first glimpses obtained from

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'Abd-el-Maḥsin with the fuller information of a few days later, and to give here a brief account, derived from the past history of Djebel Shomer, and the foundation and progress of its present prosperity.

And here, as an apology necessary perhaps in regard to some who may think unworthy of even this slight record the history of a small country, little known beyond the homogeneous limits of its peninsula, and almost isolated century after century by the encircling desert, I shall venture to make my own the elegant paragraph with which the author of "Waverley" concludes the fifth chapter of that incomparable tale, and copy his very words, with a few slight substitutions alone required by the difference of subject. So, "I beg pardon, once and for all, of those readers who take up travels merely for amusement, for plaguing them so long with Arab politics and history, with Bedouin and Wahhabee, Shomer and Nejed. The truth is, I cannot promise them that this narrative shall be intelligible, not to say probable, without it. My plan requires that I should explain the motives on which events proceeded, and these motives necessarily arose from the feelings, prejudices, and parties of the times. I do not invite my fair readers, whose sex and impatience give them the greatest right to complain of these circumstances, into a flying chariot drawn by hippogriffs or moved by enchantment. Mine is a humble English post-chaise, drawn upon four wheels, and keeping his Majesty's highway. Such as dislike the vehicle may leave it at the next halt, and wait for the conveyance of Prince Hussein's tapestry, or Malek the weaver's flying sentry-box. Those who are contented to remain with me will be occasionally exposed to the dulness inseparable from heavy roads, steep hills, sloughs, and other terrestrial retardations; but with tolerable horses and a civil driver, as the advertisements have it, I engage to get as soon as possible into a more picturesque and romantic country, if my passengers incline to have some patience with me during my first stages." And having thus invoked the Muse, or better, the Genius of Abbotsford to my aid, I continue.

At an early, indeed the earliest known period in the history of central Arabia, the numerous and powerful tribe of Ṭā'i, first

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arrived from Yemen, occupied the district included by the parallel mountain chains of which the northernmost was then entitled Djebel 'Aja, now Djebel Shomer, and its southerly sister Djebel Salma, a name it has preserved to the present day. Some of the clan dwelt in the towns and villages scattered through the valleys, while others followed the roving life which forms and maintains the Bedouin.

About the year 500 of our era occurred the celebrated conflict between the tribes of Nejed, headed by Koleyb Wā'il, chief of Ṭaghleb, and the armies of Yemen led by the Lakhmite chiefs, which ended in the overthrow of the latter, and the entire deliverance of Nejed from the Kahtanite yoke. In this war Ṭā'i, though of Yemenite origin, sided with the Nejdean clans of Rebeea'. Soon after followed the civil war between those very clans, on occasion of the death of Koleyb, treacherously murdered by his kinsman Djessās. This caused many important changes in the relative position of the central tribes, and a large settlement of Beni Ṭaghleb, Beni 'Abs, and Howāzin took place within the limits of Djebel Shomer, where the new settlers united with the elder inhabitants, or Beni Ṭā'i, and from this union sprang the tribe of Shomer, whose appellation has remained unchanged to our time. Such is at least the account given by the inhabitants themselves; and though imaginative fiction has been busy at adorning it with many marvellous episodes, yet its historical veracity in the main cannot, I think, reasonably be called in doubt.

Coming down to the earlier years of Mahometan rule, we find this district still powerful and independent, resisting successfully all the efforts of the Ommiade Caliphs, whose armies suffered a signal defeat at the entrance of these very mountains during the reign of Merwan, towards the beginning of the eighth century. This event is followed by a long period of time during which little or nothing authentic has been recorded in Shomer history. One principal reason of this silence was that these mountains lay at a considerable distance from the ordinary pilgrim roads to Mecca, and were too far removed from Bagdad or Cairo to be much influenced by the Abbaside or Fatimite caliphates, and by the various dynasties or anarchies that succeeded them, down to the final

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conquest of Syria and Egypt by the Ottoman Sultans in the sixteenth century. Hence they were left with the rest of Nejed to their own resources, nor perhaps fared the worse for that, while at the same time want of external communication cut them out of the general volume of Oriental annals. A large portion of the tribes that had coalesced to form the great clan of Shomer had once been Christians, and they appear to have remained so still, at the epoch when they repelled the invasion of the Ommiade troops. The clan of Bedr, to whom belonged the easterly range of 'Aja, was entirely Christian. Probably a time came when all more or less professed Islamism. But at last we find them relapsed into a state of semi-barbarism, having resumed the old Pagan forms of worship, and subdivided themselves into as many rival or hostile chieftainships as there were villages in the land; nay often a single town was rent into two or more contending factions, resembling what we have seen exemplified in the Djowf, to the utter ruin of all civilization and prosperity. Here again we are reminded of the European middle ages. Arabia repeats, so to speak, in a faint reflection the course of the Western world. "There is a kind of circle in events," says Tacitus; history comes round like the seasons.

There has been a tendency, I hardly know why, to praise the clannish system, and decorate it with the title of "patriarchal." But the patriarchs were not a nation, nor even a people, and when the Jewish race did at last become such, one has only to look over their national history from Judges to Chronicles, to find painful evidence that the ruin of Israel was, humanly speaking, owing for the most part to that very clannish spirit, which set "Manasses against Ephraim and Ephraim against Manasses, and these together against Judah." But whatever may have been the case with the Jews, it is certain that this persistence in hereditary classification, stronger habitually among the Arabs than all ties of government and of patriotism, or even of religion, has been and always will be a bar to the permanence of institutions for the common good, and to any general advancement of the entire race. The rods, so long as some strong hand binds them together, may seem to unite and form themselves into a single stem; but no sooner

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is the blending hand withdrawn, than they start asunder, and resume their former severance. Or, to take another and a not inappropriate metaphor, if the elements mix together awhile, it is only mechanically, never chemically. This remark applies more especially to the inhabitants of the north and centre; those of southern Arabia present, as we shall afterwards see, a remarkable and advantageous difference in this respect. So much for "clans" in general; let us now return to Djebel Shomer, and its more recent phases.

This province, in common with the rest of the peninsula, underwent the short-lived tyranny of the first Wahhabee empire at the beginning of the present century, and, like many other districts, was but transiently affected by it. The storm soon blew over, and left matters religious and political pretty much where they were before. At this period the town of Ḥā'yel was already looked on as in a manner the capital of Djebel Shomer, a distinction which it owed partly to its superior size and resources, and partly to its central position; yet its chiefs could not enforce their authority over any great distance beyond the walls of the town, at least in a regular way. The supreme rule was held by the family of Beyt 'Alee, ancient denizens of the city, and who seem to have fully appreciated both in theory and practice "the right divine of kings to govern wrong."

But there lived then in the same town of Ḥā'yel a young and enterprising chief, of the family Rasheed, belonging to the clan of Dja'afer, the noblest branch of the Shomer tribe. Many of his near relations were Bedouins, though his own direct ancestors had long occupied the social position of townsmen. His name was 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed; wealthy, as wealth here goes, high-born, and conscious of ability and vigour, he aspired to wrest their hitherto undisputed pre-emineuce from the chiefs of Beyt 'Alee; his own powerful and numerous relatives lent their aid to his endeavour. The inhabitants of Ḥā'yel favoured some the one and some the other party, and on the whole 'Abd-Allah's faction was the stronger within the walls of the capital. But the neighbouring village of Kefar held to a man for Beyt 'Alee, and Kefar was at that time almost equal in strength and population to Ḥā'yel; indeed, to judge by

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popular song and local tradition, our only guide here, Kefar was considered the more aristocratic town of the two.

After many preliminary bickerings, the struggle between 'Abd-Allah and Beyt 'Alee began; but the result proved unfavourable to the young competitor for sovereignty, and he was driven into exile. This happened about the year 1818 or 1820. With a few of his relatives, fugitives like himself, he took the road of the Djowf, in hopes of refuge and alliance; but not finding either, he passed on to Wadi Sirḥan, whose depths have ever been a common asylum for men in a similar predicament up to the present time. While he and his followers were wandering amid the labyrinths of the valley, they were suddenly attacked by a strong party of 'Anezeh Bedouins, hereditary enemies of the Shomer clan. 'Abd-Allah and his companions fought well, but numbers gained the day. The Benoo-Dja'afer fell without exception on the field of battle; the victorious 'Anezeh "stripped and gashed the slain;" none of 'Abd-Allah's companions remained alive, and he himself was left for dead amid the corpses on the sand.

What follows, I give as I heard it in Djebel Shomer, without anywise vouching for its accuracy or even veracity; Arab imagination, that most inventive faculty, has here done its utmost; yet the tale is worth recording for the illustration it at least affords of the mind of those who tell or who believe it.

The 'Anezeh had, as is often their wont, "made assurance doubly sure" by cutting the throats of the wounded where they lay on the ground; and in this respect 'Abd-Allah had fared no better than his comrades. But the destined possessor of a throne was not thus to perish before his time. While he lay senseless, his blood fast ebbing from the gaping gash, the locusts of the desert surrounded the chief, and with their wings and feet cast the hot sand into his wounds, till this rude styptic stayed the life-stream in its flow. Meanwhile a flock of Ḳaṭa, a partridge-like bird common in these regions, hovered over him to protect him from the burning sun—a service for which unwounded travellers in the Arabian wilds would be hardly less grateful.

A merchant of Damascus, accompanied by a small caravan, was on his way home to Syria from the Djowf, and chanced to

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pass close by the scene of carnage and miracle. He saw the wounded youth, and the wondrous intervention of Heaven in his behalf. Amazed at the spectacle, and conjecturing no ordinary future for one whose life was so dear to Providence, he alighted by his side, bound up his wounds, applied what means for reviving suspended animation the place and circumstances could allow of, placed him on one of his camels, and took him to Damascus.

There 'Abd-Allah, now the charitable merchant's guest, and treated by him like a son, speedily recovered strength and vigour. His generous preserver then supplied him with arms and provision for the way, and sent him back with a well-stored girdle to Arabia once more.

But to Djebel Shomer he could not return as a prince, and would not return as a subject. So, following a circuitous track, he passed on to the inner Nejed, and there offered his services in quality of "condottiere" to Turkee, son of 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Sa'ood, a prince whose despotic reign and tragical end we shall relate further on, with the fortunes of his dynasty. Turkee was then actively engaged in reconstructing his father's kingdom, ruined by the Egyptian invasion, and in recovering one after another the provinces formerly subject to Wahhabee domination. From such a prince 'Abd-Allah naturally found a ready welcome, and work in abundance. He was the foremost in every fray, and soon became the head of a considerable division in the Wahhabee army.

In 1830 or thereabouts, for I have been unable to procure from Arab negligence the exact date of this and of many other important incidents, Turkee resolved on the conquest of Ḥaṣa, one of the richest appanages of the old Nejdean crown. But since public affairs did not permit the withdrawing of his own personal presence from Ri'aḍ, his capital, he placed his eldest son Feyṣul at the head of the royal armies, and sent them to the invasion of the eastern coast. 'Abd-Allah as a matter of course joined the expedition, and, though a stranger by birth, was much looked up to by Feyṣul and his officers, and was almost their leader in all military operations.

Hardly had the Wahhabee army reached the frontiers of Ḥaṣa, and, having passed the narrow defiles of Ghoweyr, where

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we too, gentle reader, will pass in due time, were just proceeding to lay siege to the town of Hofhoof, when news reached them that Turkee had been treacherously assassinated during the evening prayers in the great mosque of the city by his own cousin Meshāree, and that the murderer had already occupied the vacant throne.

A council of war was at once called. The "Hushais" there present, and they were the greater number, advised Feyṣul to continue the war in Ḥaṣa, and after the conquest of that opulent province, return rich with its spoils to wrest the crown from his usurping relative. But 'Abd-Allah, a very Ahithophel in counsel, observed that such delay would only serve to give Meshāree better leisure for collecting troops, fortifying the capital, and thus becoming a yet more dangerous, if not an insurmountable enemy. Accordingly, he insisted on Feyṣul's immediate return with all his troops to Ri'aḍ, as the surest way to take Meshāree unprepared, avenge the yet warm blood of Turkee, and secure the capital and the central provinces for the rightful heir. For what concerned Ḥaṣa, its conquest could be only all the more certain for being a moment deferred.

Feyṣul, wiser than Absalom, subscribed to 'Abd-Allah's opinion, and the event fully justified him. Without loss of time the camp was broken up, and the whole army in movement on its backward way for Ri'aḍ, under whose walls forced marches speedily brought them, while Meshāree yet imagined his competitor far off on the other side of the passes in the distant plains of Ḥaṣa.

On the first appearance of the lawful prince, all Nejed rose round his banner. The capital followed the example, the gates were thrown open, and Feyṣul entered Ri'aḍ amid enthusiastic acclamations, and without striking a blow.

But Meshāree still occupied the palace, whose high walls and massive outworks could stand a long siege, as sieges go in Arabia; while within the fortress he had at his disposition all the state treasury, artillery, and ammunition, beside good store of provisions in case of blockade; lastly, he was protected by a powerful garrison of his own retainers, well paid and well armed. Thus provided, he determined to hold out, and wait a turn of fortune. It came, but against him.

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Feyṣul, on his side, ordered an immediate assault on the fortress. It was delivered, but the thick walls and iron-bound gates, joined to the desperate valour of the defenders, baffled all efforts; and the assailants were reduced to wait the slow results of a regular siege.

This lasted twenty days without bringing material advantage to either party. But on the twenty-first night, 'Abd-Allah, desirous to bring matters to a conclusion by any means, however hazardous, took with him two sturdy companions of his Shomer kinsmen, refugees like himself, and, under cover of darkness, went roaming round the castle walls in hopes of detecting some unguarded spot. At a narrow window high up under the battlements (it was afterwards pointed out to me when I was at the very place) a light was glimmering. 'Abd-Allah drew close underneath, took a pebble, and threw it up against the window. A head appeared and called out in a muffled tone, "Who are you?" Abd-Allah recognized the voice of an old palace retainer, long in the service of the deceased monarch, and his own intimate friend. He answered by his name. "What is your purpose?" said the old man. "Let us down a cord, and we will arrange the rest."

Presently the rustling of a rope came down the wall. 'Abd-Allah and his two companions clambered up one after the other, and soon stood together within the palace chamber. "Where does Meshāree sleep?" was the ominous question. The servant of Turkee indicated the way. Threading the dark corridors, barefoot and in silence, the three adventurers reached the door of the usurper's bedchamber. They tried it; it was bolted from within. "In the name of God!" exclaimed 'Abd-Allah, and with one vigorous thrust burst the lock, and the room lay open.

There lay Meshāree, with a pair of loaded pistols under his pillow. At the noise he started up, and saw three dark outlines before him. Seizing his weapons, he fired them off in quick succession, and the two companions of 'Abd-Allah fell, one dead, the other death-wounded, yet alive. But 'Abd-Allah remained unscathed, and rushed on his victim, sword in hand. Meshāree, a man of herculean size, seized the arms of his enemy and grappled with him. Both fell on the floor, but Meshāree

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kept firm hold on the sword-arm of 'Abd-Allah, and bent himself to wrest the weapon from his hand. While thus they rolled together in doubtful struggle, the dying comrade of 'Abd-Allah, collecting his last strength, dragged himself to their side, and seized the wrist of Meshāree with such convulsive force, that it made him for an instant relax his hold. That instant 'Abd-Allah freed his sword, and plunged it again and again into the body of his antagonist, who expired without a struggle.

Not a cry had been raised, not an alarm given. 'Abd-Allah cut off the head of Meshāree where he lay, and with it in his hand returned to the chamber where the servant of Turkee awaited trembling the result of the attempt. By the lamplight both made themselves sure that the disfigured features were indeed those of the usurper. Then without a moment's loss 'Abd-Allah went to the window and, leaning out, raised his voice to its utmost pitch to alarm the camp of Feyṣul, whose advanced guard was not far from the palace. Several soldiers started up, and when they approached the wall, "Take the dog's head," exclaimed 'Abd-Allah, and flung his bloody trophy in the midst. A shout of triumph echoed throughout the city. Meanwhile the servant of Turkee rushed down to the outer palace gates, and threw them open, proclaiming Amān, or quarter to all of Meshāree's retinue who would acknowledge Feyṣul for their master. A few minutes more, and Feyṣul himself stood within his father's walls, now his own.

No resistance was offered. "God has willed it," was the only comment of Meshāree's followers as they presented unhesitating allegiance to their new sovereign. Feyṣul was now undisputed master throughout Nejed, and the circumstances of his accession only secured him the more the attachment of his subjects.

The son of Turkee was not ungrateful to him whose intrepidity had placed him on his father's throne. He openly acknowledged—an honourable proceeding in a king—the eminent services of 'Abd-Allah, and determined to requite his daring mercenary with a crown, bestowed in return for the crown thus acquired. To this end he named him absolute governor of his native province, Shomer, with right of succession, and supplied him with troops and all other means for the establishment of his rule.

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'Abd-Allah returned to Ḥā'yel, now no longer a proscribed exile, but a powerful and dreaded chieftain, with an army at his bidding. He soon drove out the rival family of Beyt 'Alee from the town, where his own authority was henceforth supreme. Here he fixed his residence, while he intrusted the fullness of his vengeance on the ill-fated chieftains of Beyt 'Alee to his younger brother 'Obeyd, "the Wolf," to give him the name by which he is commonly known, a name well earned by his unrelenting cruelty and deep deceit. 'Obeyd with his horsemen dislodged Beyt 'Alee from Kefar, though not till after an obstinate struggle, and then pursued them from town to town till he drove them into Ḳaseem. The inhabitants of Ḳaseem rose to defend the fugitives. 'Obeyd called for fresh troops from Nejed, and engaged to put his conquests at the disposal of Feyṣul. On this condition supplies were furnished, and "the Wolf" at their head laid waste the fertile lands of Ḳaseem with such savage fury, that to this day his name is a curse throughout the province, like that of Cromwell or Claverhouse in Ireland and Scotland. The Beyt 'Alee were cut off root and branch; one child alone, hidden in a small village on the outskirts of Ḳaseem, escaped the slayers. When Ṭelāl years after ascended the throne, he sent for the lad, the only representative now surviving of his hereditary enemies, gave him estates and riches, and installed him in a handsome dwelling within the capital itself, thus with rare but politic generosity obviating the last chances of a rival faction.

While 'Obeyd was wolfing it in Ḳaseem, 'Abd-Allah's main care was to consolidate his power in Djebel Shomer itself. Kefar had been already won, next the large and neighbouring villages of Woseyṭah, Laḳeeṭah, Moḳah, and others, fell one by one under his rule in spite of much opposition and bloodshed, and before long he saw himself sole master of the whole mountain district. But beyond 'Āja' and Solma his sway did not extend, and the conquests made by his brother in the south were according to the previous stipulation given over to the Wahhabee monarch. 'Abd-Allah too all his lifetime paid a stated tribute to Feyṣul, of whom he was in fact a mere viceroy, while, the more to ensure the support of his powerful neighbour and jealous benefactor, he caused the Wahhabee religion to be re-

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cognized officially for that of the new state, and encouraged the Nejdean Meṭow'wā'as (a term already explained) in their zeal for the extirpation of the many local superstitious practices still observed in Djebel Shomer. This was a very unpopular measure, nor did 'Abd-Allah adopt it from any motive, it would seem, of real religious conviction, but merely to avoid being deposed sooner or later by the same hand that had raised him to the throne. He did not, however, neglect the while to strengthen his own national influence, and to this end he had at an early period contracted a marriage alliance with a powerful chieftain's family of Dja'afer, his near kinsman by blood. Strong in the support of this restless clan, who cared little about Wahhabee dogmas and enactments which they well knew could never reach them, he subdued with their help the rivalry of town and country nobles, and gratified at once his own ambition and the rapacity of his Bedouin allies by the measures that crushed his domestic enemies and ensured his pre-eminence. Plots were formed against him, broken, and formed again; hired assassins dogged him in the streets, open rebellion broke out in the province, but 'Abd-Allah escaped every danger and prostrated every opponent, till his "star," less fickle if less famous than that of the Corsican, became a proverb for good fortune in Shomer; it was no other than his own calculating courage and inflexible resolve. Yet his memory is scarcely a favourite with the citizens of Ḥā'yel, little disposed to sympathize with Wahhabees and Bedouins; and the weight of the new government pressed heaviest, as needs was, on the best and most thriving portion of the general population.

Towards the latter part of his reign 'Abd-Allah took a measure eminently calculated, at least under the actual circumstances, to secure the permanence of his dynasty. Hitherto he had dwelt in a quarter of the capital which the old chieftains and the nobility had mainly chosen for their domicile, and where the new monarch was surrounded by men his equals in birth and of even more ancient title to command. But now he added a new quarter to the town, and there laid the foundations of a vast palace destined for the future abode of the king and the display of all his grandeur, amid streets and nobles of his

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own creation. The walls of the projected edifice were fast rising when he died, almost suddenly, in 1844 or 1845, leaving three sons, Ṭelāl, Meta'ab, and Moḥammed, the eldest scarce twenty years of age, besides his only surviving brother 'Obeyd, who could not then have been much under fifty.

Ṭelāl was already highly popular, much more so than his father, and had given early tokens of those superior qualities which accompanied him to the throne. All parties united to proclaim him sole heir to the kingdom and lawful successor to the regal power, and thus the rival pretensions of 'Obeyd, hated by many and feared by all, were smothered at the outset and put aside without a contest.

The young sovereign possessed, in fact, all that Arab ideas require to ensure good government and lasting popularity. Affable towards the common people, reserved and haughty with the aristocracy, courageous and skilful in war, a lover of commerce and building in time of peace, liberal even to profusion, yet always careful to maintain and augment the state revenue, neither over strict nor yet scandalously lax in religion, secret in his designs, but never known to break a promise once given, or violate a plighted faith; severe in administration, yet averse to bloodshed, he offered the very type of what an Arab prince should be. I might add, that among all rulers or governors, European or Asiatic, with whose acquaintance I have ever chanced to be honoured, I know few equal in the true art of government to Ṭelāl, son of 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed.

His first cares were directed to adorn and civilize the capital. Under his orders, enforced by personal superintendence, the palace commenced by his father was soon brought to completion. But he added, what probably his father would hardly have thought of, a long row of warehouses, the dependencies and property of the same palace; next he built a market-place consisting of about eighty shops or magazines, destined for public commerce and trade, and lastly constructed a large mosque for the official prayers of Friday. Round the palace, and in many other parts of the town, he opened streets, dug wells, and laid out extensive gardens, besides strengthening the old fortifications all round and adding new ones. At the same time he managed to secure at once the fidelity and the

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absence of his dangerous uncle by giving him charge of those military expeditions which best satisfied the restless energy of 'Obeyd. The first of these wars was directed, I know not on what pretext, against Kheybar. But as Ṭelāl intended rather to enforce submission than to inflict ruin, he associated with 'Obeyd in the military command his own brother Meta'ab, to put a check on the ferocity of the former. Kheybar was conquered, and Ṭelāl sent thither, as governor in his name, a young man of Ḥā'yel, prudent and gentle, whom I subsequently met when he was on a visit at the capital.

Not long after, the inhabitants of Ḳaseem, weary of Wahhabee tyranny, turned their eyes towards Ṭelāl, who had already given a generous and inviolable asylum to the numerous political exiles of that district. Secret negotiations took place, and at a favourable moment the entire uplands of that province—after a fashion not indeed peculiar to Arabia—annexed themselves to the kingdom of Shomer by universal and unanimous suffrage. Ṭelāl made suitable apologies to the Nejdean monarch, the original sovereign of the annexed district; he could not resist the popular wish; it had been forced on him, &c. &c. &c.;—but Western Europe is familiar with the style. Feyṣul felt the inopportuneness of a quarrel with the rapidly growing power to which he himself had given origin only a few years before, and, after a wry face or two, swallowed the pill. Meanwhile Ṭelāl, knowing the necessity of a high military reputation both at home and abroad, undertook in person a series of operations against Teyma' and its neighbourhood. Everywhere his arms were successful, and his moderation in victory secured the attachment of the vanquished themselves.

Of the war of Djowf and the conquest of that province I have already spoken. Other expeditions of minor consequence, but always fortunate in their result, were headed by Ṭelāl; while 'Obeyd is said to have taken the field above forty times. These military doings, in which there was often more display than slaughter, were principally directed against the Bedouins, who occupied, as a glance at the map will show, a very large portion of Ṭelāl's domains, and whom that prince made it his capital business to put down everywhere. With the nomades of the outer districts he had no great difficulty;

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but he found much more with his own kinsmen and near neighbours, the Arabs of Shomer.

In order to carry out his views for enriching the country by the benefits of free and regular commerce, security on the high roads and the cessation of plundering forays were indispensable. Now the tribe of Dja'afar, his own blood relations, had grown especially insolent through the favour of 'Abd-Allah, whose instruments they had been in subduing the towns and villages of the mountain. Ṭelāl, who had not the same need of them, now played his father's game backwards, subduing these same Bedouins by the means of the very populations whom they had formerly oppressed, and who were naturally eager for their turn of revenge; while the quarrels of the clansmen among themselves afforded him frequent occasion for setting them one against another, till, weakened and divided, they all in common submitted to his yoke. "Divide et impera," is a maxim known to Arab, no less than to European statesmanship. Henceforth no Bedouin in Djebel Shomer, or throughout the whole kingdom, could dare to molest traveller or peasant.

This obstacle removed, Ṭelāl applied himself with characteristic vigour and good sense to the execution of more pacific projects. Merchants from Baṣrah, from Meshid 'Alee and Wāsiṭ, shopkeepers from Medinah and even from Yemen, were invited by liberal offers to come and establish themselves in the new market of Ḥā'yel. With some Ṭelāl made government contracts equally lucrative to himself and to them; to others he granted privileges and immunities; to all, protection and countenance. Many of these traders belonged to the Shiya'a sect, hated by all good Sonnites, doubly hated by the Wahhabees. But Ṭelāl affected not to perceive their religious discrepancies, and silenced all murmurs by marks of special favour towards these very dissenters, and also by the advantages which their presence was not long in procuring for the town. He even exerted his ability to persuade Jews and Christians from the north to take up their abode in his capital, where he promised them entire security and free exercise of religion. But the great distance of Ḥā'yel from all Christian or Jewish centres has hitherto hindered this liberal-minded design from

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taking effect. Meanwhile the desired impulse had been given: the town became a centre of trade and industry, and many of its inhabitants followed the example of the foreigners thus settled among them, and rivalled them in diligence and in wealth.

All this, however, could not but irritate the Wahhabee faction of the country, at whose head stood the sanguinary fanatic 'Obeyd. Feyṣul, too, already annoyed by the Ḳaseem annexation, now sent forth from his Nejdean fastnesses loud protestations against the laxity of his "brother," Ṭelāl. Besides, horrible to Wahhabee thought and hearing, Ṭelāl was rumoured to indulge in the heretical pleasure of tobacco, to wear silk, and to be very seldom seen in the mosque; though indeed it might be charitably hoped that he said his prayers at home. Lastly, and this was no good sign in Wahhabee eyes, he showed much more disposition to pardon prisoners or criminals than to behead them; and the encouragement he gave to commerce did not seem at all consistent with the character of a true Muslim, who should only know three legitimate sources of profit or pleasure —war, prayer, and women.

In spite of all Ṭelāl steadily pursued his way, while his dexterous prudence threw over these enormities a veil sufficient for decency, if not for absolute concealment. If he smoked, it was only in private, and by way of remedy, prescribed by the best physicians, for some occult disease, which admitted of no other means of cure; no sooner shall the malady be removed, than he will give it up. If he harboured Shiya'as, it was that they had to his own personal knowledge declared themselves sincere converts to the Sonnee creed. The commerce of Ḥā'yel was not his, but the work of private individuals, with whom, much to his regret, he could not interfere. What excuse he made for his unorthodox leniency in war and judgment I did not hear, but I doubt not that it was a plausible one. And finally, if he was obliged by business to absent himself sometimes from the mosque, he always took care that his uncle or some one of the family should be there to represent him:—

> Ne'er went to church, 't was such a busy life;
> But duly sent his family and wife.

But above and besides apologies, judicious presents despatched

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from time to time to the Nejed, and an alliance brought about with one of Feyṣul's numerous daughters, went far to appease the Wahhabee. In his own kingdom also Ṭelāl made suitable concessions to orthodox zeal. The public sale of tobacco was prohibited; and if any went on in a contraband way in back shops or under private roofs, government could not be held responsible. Although silk was tolerated for wear, orders were given that the ungodly material should be mixed with so much cotton as to render it no longer an object of strict and legal animadversion. In the capital, where Nejdean spies often came, the inhabitants were requested to pay fitting attendance on public prayers, and the mosque became tolerably full. Besides 'Obeyd was so regular and devout, so far from the abominations of silk and tobacco, so frequent in long recitations of the Coran and invectives against infidels, that his good example might almost atone for and cover the scandals given by his nephew, and yet more by Meta'ab, a very "wild young man," whose eternal Nargheelah and silken dress, unsanctified by a single thread of cotton, shocked pious noses and eyes, and constituted a crime of which said one day a Nejdean Meṭow'waa', pointing to the gay head-dress of the prince, "all other wickedness may be forgiven by God, but *that* never." But of Wahhabee action in these countries, and of the Arab reaction against it, I shall have afterwards occasion to say more; let us now return to Ṭelāl.

His conduct towards the Ottoman government is not less skilful, nor is the position a whit less delicate. For if his southern and eastern frontiers border the Wahhabee, his northern boundaries are marked out by the pashalics of Bagdad and Damascus; while the great Mecca road, itself regarded as Ottoman territory, forms his western limit beyond Teyma and Kheybar. Constant commerce with Meshid 'Alee, with Sooḳ-esh-Sheyooḳ, and other localities near the Euphrates, bring him into frequent contact with Turkish subjects, and even with Turks themselves; while an equally active trading intercourse with Medinah and the pilgrim caravans produces the same result on the opposite side of the kingdom. Hence he is continually obliged to conciliate favour and to elude quarrels; while every forward step in these directions, however desirable, is fraught

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with danger. In truth, whatever passes at Ḥā'yel is sure to be reported sooner or later at Bagdad and Medinah, nay even at Damascus; this my readers may well understand from the very events of our own first arrival here. I should add that the knowledge so acquired of what passes in Arabia seldom goes beyond Mahometan limits, nor is shared in by others than men of office and government; the Bashas learn something, the ordinary crowd less, and Europeans least of all. From these last, indeed, even though long resident in the East, I have heard few statements relative to inner Arabia which were corroborated, or even which were not contradicted, by facts on the spot.

In accordance with the policy just described, the name of the Sultan, with its pompous appendix of now unmeaning titles, is proclaimed every Friday with a loud voice in the public prayer of Ḥā'yel, and profession is made that Ṭelāl is only his vicegerent, and from him derives all authority. Not that a single "para" is ever sent from Djebel Shomer to the treasuries of Constantinople, nor a soldier furnished to the Turkish battalions from the entire extent of Ṭelāl's dominion. But no one is allowed to speak otherwise than with respect of 'Abd-el-'Azeez, who is always to be styled "Sultan" and Ruler; and though Wahhabees call him an "infidel," and the men of Shomer "a Turkish mule," such courteous sayings can only be uttered in private. Should a Turkish officer, and this will sometimes happen, take his returning course from the pilgrimage by the passes of Ḥā'yel, or direct his route that way to Medinah, he meets with nothing but courtesy, hears nothing but loyalty. And, to come to more ticklish matters, if Ṭelāl himself conquers Kheybar and Teyma, both within the imaginary limits of the Porte, and attacks and subdues the western tribes from Medā, in Sāleḥ to Kerak, on the very ground of the Sultan, it is all in the service of his Ottoman Majesty, and to ensure the tranquillity and subordination of the Turkish frontier. Nay, if he place governors in the Djowf, without a single with your leave or by your leave from Constantinople, and send expeditions to the limits of Belḳā, and under the walls of Meshid 'Alee, it is in the name of 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and all for his Majesty's profit.

Thus, closely watched on all sides by rivals and enemies, and

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guiding his newly-constructed bark between the Wahhabee Scylla and the Ottoman Charybdis, Ṭelāl has to look out for allies and friends against the hour of danger, which, with all his prudence, he can hardly hope to avert for many years. With Europeans, indeed, of whatever nation, he wisely declines any intercourse, except that of mere courtesy, should occasion offer, well persuaded by the events of other and even of neighbouring countries, that the interference of such is but too often either unavailing or pernicious. But with Egypt to the west and with Persia to the east, he keeps up a very frequent and a more congenial intercourse; from the latter he procures considerable commercial advantages, besides moral support at Bagdad, while from the former he may reckon on military aid and a strong arm, should need require.

Towards his own subjects his conduct is uniformly of a nature to merit their obedience and attachment, and few sovereigns have here met with better success. Once a day, often twice, he gives public audience, hears patiently, and decides in person, the minutest causes with great good sense. To the Bedouins, no insignificant portion of his rule, he makes up for the restraint he imposes, and the tribute he levies from them, by a profusion of hospitality not to be found elsewhere in the whole of Arabia from 'Aḳabah to 'Aden. His guests at the midday and evening meal are never less than fifty or sixty, and I have often counted up to two hundred at a banquet, while presents of dress and arms are of frequent if not of daily occurrence. It is hard for Europeans to estimate how much popularity such conduct brings an Asiatic prince. Meanwhile the townsfolk and villagers love him for the more solid advantages of undisturbed peace at home, of flourishing commerce, of extended dominion, and military glory.

Very seldom does this remarkable sovereign inflict capital punishment, and the severest penalty with which he has hitherto chastised political offences is banishment or prison. Indeed, even in cases of homicide or murder, he has been known not unfrequently to avail himself of the option allowed by Arab custom between a fine and retaliation, and to buy off the offender, by bestowing on the family of the deceased the allotted price of blood from his own private treasury, and that from a pure motive

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of humanity. When execution does take place, it is always by beheading; nor is any other mode of putting to death customary in Arabia; indeed Ottoman and Persian barbarity, with their impalings, burnings, and the like, are strongly reprobated here. In Nejed we shall afterwards meet with one and one only exception to this general rule. Stripes, however, are not uncommon, though administered on the broad back, not on the sole of the foot. They are the common chastisement for minor offences, like stealing, cursing, or quarrelling; in this last case both parties usually come in for their share.

With his numerous retainers he is almost over-indulgent, and readily pardons a mistake or a negligence; falsehood alone he never forgives; and it is notorious that whoever has once lied to Ṭelāl must give up all hopes of future favour.

In private life he relaxes much of his official gravity; laughs, jokes, chats, enjoys poetry and tales, and smokes, but only in presence of his more intimate friends. He has three wives, taken each and all, it would seem, from some political motive. One is the daughter of Feyṣul, the Wahhabee monarch, a second belongs to a noble family of Ḥā'yel, a third is from among his kinswomen of the tribe of Dja'afar; thus in a way conciliating three different interests, but uniting them in one household. He has three sons: the eldest named Bedr, a clever and handsome lad of twelve or thereabouts; the second, Bander; the third is 'Abd-Allah, a very pretty and intelligent child of five or six. He has some daughters, too, but I do not know their number, for here, as elsewhere in the East, they are looked on as something rather to be ashamed of than otherwise, and accordingly are never mentioned. It will be long before this ungallant indication of ancient barbarism, fostered by Mahometan influences, disappears from Oriental manners.

Such is Ṭelāl. His reign has now lasted nearly twenty years, and hitherto with unvaried and well-deserved prosperity. He has gone far to civilize the most barbarous third of the Arabian continent, and has established law and security where they had been unknown for ages past. We shall now see him in a more intimate and personal point of view.

'Abd-el-Maḥsin stayed with us awhile, and then left us, saying that the public audience of the day was drawing nigh, and that

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his attendance there would be expected; for ourselves we were to be admitted immediately afterwards to a private interview. Meanwhile we may reasonably conjecture that he went to tell Ṭelāl of his own espionage, and conjectures regarding the Syrian adventurers.

The sun was now tolerably high in heaven; but as the long palace wall faced the west, the seats beneath it and even a good part of the courtyard were yet in shade. When morning advanced this space gradually filled up with groups of citizens, countrymen, and Bedouins, some to despatch business, others merely as lookers on. About nine, if I judged correctly of the time from the solar altitude, Ṭelāl, "dressed in all his best," and surrounded by a score of armed attendants, with his third brother Moḥammed at his side (for the second, Meta'ab, was absent from Ḥā'yel, nor did he return till some days later), issued in due state and gravity from the palace portal, and took his seat on the raised dais in the centre against the wall. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin and Zāmil placed themselves close by, while officers and attendants, to the number of sixty or thereabouts, filled up the line. Immediately in front of Ṭelāl, but squatted on the bare ground, were our Sherarat companions, the 'Azzām chiefs, every one with his never-failing camel-switch in his hand; around and behind sat or stood a crowd of spectators, for the occasion was one of some solemnity.

"How many of those I know would give half their having to be present at such a scene and in such a locality," thought I, while almost wondering at our own quiet and secure position amid the multitude; for, to say truth, how little of Arab rule or life has yet been witnessed by Europeans, how little faithfully described? Half romantic and always over-coloured scenes of wild Bedouins, painted up into a sort of chivalresque knight-errants and representatives of unthralled freedom; or, perhaps, the heavy and hollow formalities of some coast or frontier courtlet, more than half Ottomanized; apocryphal legends, like those of Lamartine, and the sentimental superficialities of his school,—such is almost all that we possess on these subjects, and from which we are invited to form our criterion and appreciation of Arabia and its people. But not in the Syrian desert, nor on the limits of the Ḥejaz, not in the streets of Mokha, nor in the

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markets of Meshid 'Alee, still less at Bagdad or Damascus, is the true idea of genuine Arab ways and manners to be sought or found.

The researches of Pococke, the incomparable exactitude of Niebuhr, the varied information of Burckhardt, the minute accuracy of Wallen, the sailor-like daring of Welsted, deserve indeed the highest praise as well as the fullest confidence. Nor is it in a spirit of idle rivalry, far less of depreciation, that while mentioning names of such justly earned celebrity, I beg permission to point out the limits within which circumstances, those impassable boundary-walls of human life and enterprise, confined their experience of Arabia. This was for the most part derived from the frontier provinces and the outer surface; of the interior, whether physical or moral, they have less to tell. Yet a description of the foot or of the hand, however trustworthy, does not always furnish a complete idea of the body or the head, still less of the anatomical structure within. "Ex pede Herculem," is an excellent adage, but not always applicable to living nations and to human nature.

While I was occupied in these reflections, and my companion in his, of which I cannot pretend to give an account, but I suppose them to have been what a youth of Zaḥlah might be expected to make in similar circumstances, the audience went on; and the 'Azzām chieftains or ragamuffins presented their coarse Bedouin submission, much like runaway hounds crouching before their whipper-in, when brought back to the kennel and the lash. Ṭelāl accepted it, though without giving them to understand his own personal intentions respecting them and their clansmen, and detained them for several days without any decisive answer, thus affording them suitable leisure to experience the profusion of his hospitality, and to become yet more deeply impressed with the display of his power.

"The Arab's understanding is in his eyes," is here a common proverb, and current among all, whether Bedouins or townsmen. It implies, "the Arab judges of things as he sees them present before him, not in their causes or consequences:" keen and superficial. This is eminently true of the Bedouins, though more or less of every Arab whatsoever; it is also true in a measure of all children, even European, who in this resemble

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not a little the "gray barbarian." A huge palace, a few large pieces of artillery, armed men in gay dresses, a copious supper, a great crowd, there are no better arguments for persuading nomades into submission and awe; and one may feel perfectly safe that they will never inquire too deeply whether the cannon are serviceable, the armed men faithful, the income of the treasury sure, or the supper of wholesome digestion. This Ṭelāl knows right well, and in this he seems to have the advantage over many who have attempted to establish their influence, partial or total, over the Arab race.

Other minor affairs are now concluded; the audience is at last over, Ṭelāl rises, and, accompanied by Zāmil, Moḥammed, Sa'eed (his head cavalry officer), a Meshid merchant named Ḥasan, and two or three others, slowly moves off towards the farther end of the court where it joins the market place. Seyf comes up to us, and bids us follow.

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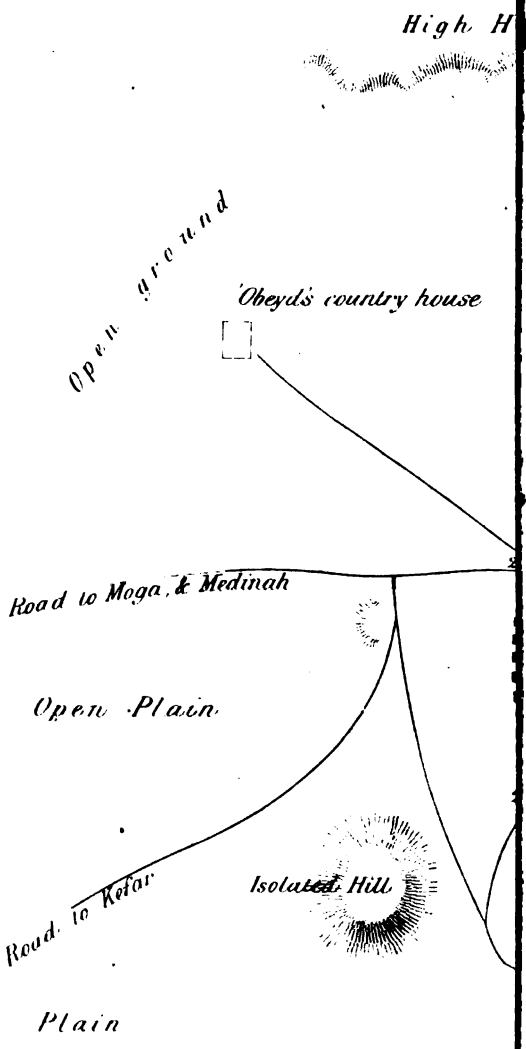

1. Telāl's Palace
1' Oval Tower
2. Meta'ab's Palace
3. Court yard in front
4. Obeyd's Palace
5. Public Mosque
6. Market Place
7. Tamil's house
8 Palace Garden
9. High Street

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CHAPTER IV

Life in Ḥā'yel

Ueberall regt sich Bildung und Streben,
Alles will sich mit Farben beleben,
Doch an Blumen fehlt's in Revier,
Sie nimmt geputzte Menschen dafür.
Kehre dich um von diesen Höhen
Nach der Stadt zurück zu sehen.—*Goethe*

PRIVATE AUDIENCE OF ṬELĀL—HIS SUSPICIONS—OUR HOUSE—REMARKS ON NATIONALITY—WE BEGIN DOCTORING—PLAN OF LIFE AND ACTION—STATE OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE PAST AND PRESENT IN ARABIA—INFLUENCE OF MAHOMETANISM—NATIVE REMEDIES AND PRACTITIONERS—THE ṢOLIBAH—OUR DAILY LIFE—A WALK OUT OF TOWN; VIEW ROUND ḤĀY'EL—MARKET-PLACE EARLY—VISITORS AND PATIENTS—'OJEYL AND HIS BROTHER—'ABD-EL-MAḤSIN AND ṬELĀL'S THREE CHILDREN—MOḤAMMED-EL-ḲADER—PEASANT OF MOGAH—DOHEYM—ḲASEEM IMMIGRATION—MARKET NEAR NOON—INTERIOR OF ḤĀ'YEL—DOHEYM'S HOUSE AND FAMILY—A FEVER CASE—ḲASERM POLITICS; STATE OF THE PROVINCE UNDER ṬELĀL—THE 'ALEY'YĀNS OF BERREYDAH—THEIR DESTRUCTION—FIRST WAR OF 'ONEYZAH—INTERVENTION OF THE SHEREEF OF MECCA—SECOND WAR—ZĀMIL AND HIS PARTISANS—CHARACTER AND PROGRESS OF THE WAR—REFLECTIONS ON ARAB CAPABILITY OF PROGRESS—WALK THROUGH THE TOWN—MIRAGE—PRAYERS OF THE 'AGR AND SERMON—PURITY OF ELOCUTION IN ḤĀ'YEL—ṬELĀL AT THE MOSQUE—HIS AFTERNOON AUDIENCES—THE EMEER ROSHEYD—ḌOḤEY'S HOUSE AND FAMILY—LITERARY MEETINGS IN A GARDEN—EVENINGS AT ḤĀ'YEL—NEW COURSE OF EVENTS.

Ṭelāl once free from the mixed crowd, pauses a moment till we rejoin him. The simple and customary salutations are given and returned. I then present him with our only available testimonial, the scrap written by Ḥamood from the Djowf. He opens it, and hands it over to Zāmil, better skilled in reading than his master. Then laying aside all his wonted gravity, and assuming a good-humoured smile, he takes my hand in his right and my companion's in his left, and thus walks on with us through the court, past the mosque, and down the market-place, while his attendants form a moving wall behind and on either side.

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He was in his own mind thoroughly persuaded that we were, as we appeared, Syrians; but imagined, nor was he entirely in the wrong thus far, that we had other objects in view than mere medical practice. But if he was right in so much, he was less fortunate in the interpretation he chose to put on our riddle, having imagined that our real scope must be to buy horses for some government, of which we must be the agents; a conjecture which had certainly the merit of plausibility. However, Ṭelāl had, I believe, no doubt on the matter, and had already determined to treat us well in the horse business, and to let us have a good bargain, as it shortly appeared.

Accordingly he began a series of questions and cross-questions, all in a jocose way, but so that the very drift of his inquiries soon allowed us to perceive what he really esteemed us. We, following our previous resolution, stuck to medicine, a family in want, hopes of good success under the royal patronage, and much of the same tenor. But Ṭelāl was not so easily to be blinkered, and kept to his first judgment. Meanwhile we passed down the street, lined with starers at the king and us, and at last arrived at the outer door of a large house near the farther end of the Sooḳ or market-place; it belonged to Ḥasan, the merchant from Meshid 'Alee.

Three of the retinue stationed themselves by way of guard at the street door, sword in hand. The rest entered with the king and ourselves; we traversed the courtyard, where the remainder of the armed men took position, while we went on to the Ḳ'hāwah. It was small, but well furnished and carpeted. Here Ṭelāl placed us amicably by his side in the highest place; his brother Moḥammed and five or six others were admitted, and seated themselves each according to his rank, while Ḥasan, being master of the house, did the honours.

Coffee was brought and pipes lighted. Meantime Ebn-Rasheed renewed his interrogatory, skilfully throwing out side remarks, now on the government of Syria, now on that of Egypt, then on the Bedouins to the north of Djowf, or on the tribes of Ḥejāz or the banks of Euphrates, thus to gain light whence and to what end we had in fact come. Next he questioned us on medicine, perhaps to discover whether we had the right professional tone; then on horses, about which same noble animals

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we affected an ignorance unnatural and very unpardonable in an Englishman; but for which I hope afterwards to make amends to my readers. All was in vain; and after a full hour our noble friend had only managed by his cleverness to get himself farther off the right track than he had been at the outset. He felt it, and determined to let matters have their own course, and to await the result of time. So he ended by assuring us of his entire confidence and protection, offering us to boot a lodging on the palace grounds. But this we declined, being desirous of studying the country as it was in itself, not through the medium of a court atmosphere; so we begged that an abode might be assigned us as near the market-place as possible: and this he promised, though evidently rather put out by our independent ways.

Excellent water-melons, ready peeled and cut up, with peaches hardly ripe, for it was the beginning of the season, were now brought in, and we all partook in common. This was the signal for breaking up; Ṭelāl renewed his proffers of favour and patronage; and we were at last reconducted to our lodgings by one of the royal guard.

Seyf now went in search of a permanent dwelling-place wherein to instal us; and before evening succeeded in finding one situated in a street leading at right angles to the market, and at no unreasonable distance from the palace. The house itself consisted of two apartments, separated by an unroofed court, with an outer door opening on the road; over the rooms was a flat roof surrounded by a very high parapet, thus making an excellent sleeping-place for summer. The locality had been occupied by one of the palace retinue, Ḥoseyn-el-Miṣree, who at Seyf's bidding evacuated the premises in our favour, and moved off to take up his quarters in the neighbourhood. We examined the dwelling-place, and found it tolerably convenient; the rooms were each about sixteen feet in length by eight or nine in breadth, and of corresponding height; one of them might officiate as a store-room and kitchen, while the other should be fitted up for a dwelling apartment. It was the zenith of the dog-days, and a bedchamber would have been a mere superfluity; the roof and open air were every way preferable, nor had we to fear intrusion, the court-walls being sixteen

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feet high or more. Every door was provided with its own distinct lock; the keys here are made of iron, and in this respect Ḥā'yel has the better of any other Arab town it was my chance to visit, where the keys were invariably wooden, and thus very liable to break and get out of order.

Before nightfall we had transferred all our goods and chattels to our new abode, and taken leave of Seyf, who, sweetly smiling, informed us that whenever we chose to take our meals at the palace we should always find them ready, and that our present lodgings were entirely at the king's cost, whose guests we were accordingly to consider ourselves, however long our stay might prove. We begged him to express our gratitude to Ṭelāl, and once arrived "at home," shut the street door, made sundry arrangements the result of which shall be visible on the morrow, and thanked God for dangers averted, and for a prosperous outset to the more important part of our journey. Hitherto we had been merely on the threshold, now we were fairly in the "promised land," and we felt all the importance of every step and every word.

Besides, in our quality of civilized men, more or less, the general appearance of power, of order, of populousness and prosperity, of vigour and rule, the extent of the palace, the fortifications, in a word, the whole "ensemble" of the capital, added to the person and character of its ruler, had not failed to produce a certain impression on our minds and senses, habituated for some months past to the loneliness of the desert, the semi-barbarism of Ma'ān and Djowf, nay, and before that, to the anarchy of Turkish misrule or no rule in Syria. "This is a government in good earnest," said, at his first arrival, my companion, who had all his life before seen nothing better than the squabbles of Lebanon and the anarchy of its districts. Indeed Ṭelāl's administration is in no respect less unquestionably superior to the Ottoman than the English or Prussian may be to Ṭelāl's.

After all, nationality is a good thing, and foreign rule but a poor compensation for it. Here was an Arab governing Arabs after their own native Arab fashion, and thus succeeding infinitely better in securing the peace of his lands, the happiness of his subjects, the regular administration of law and justice, and

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the maintenance of quiet and good order, than any Constantinople-sent Khoorshid Basha, or Foo'ad Basha, or 'Omar Basha ever did in their respective provinces, or ever can. Needs hardly say the why and wherefore; a thinking mind (and Eastern politics require one) may fill up the rest. But it would be well for Syria, well for Bagdad, well for the valley of Mosool and the Mesopotamian uplands, were the same principles that preside at Ḥā'yel applied there. It is beyond the writer's province to speak of Europe, where Poles, Servians, Sicilians, and other races may have to work out the same problem. But of Asia, at least so much of it as lies between the Ḳara-Dagh and 'Aden, I would unhesitatingly say that its specific remedy (and very sick it is wherever it forms part of the great "sick man") is to be found first and foremost in the redintegration of its nationality. *Forsan—hœc olim meminisse juvabit.*

Next morning, the 29th of July, about an hour after sunrise, the loiterers of the town—and they are numerous here as those who ever hung on the bridge at Coventry—had in us and our dwelling a new centre of curiosity and attraction. This was just what we wanted; so our outer door had been purposely left open, and the interior spectacle displayed to the delighted beholders.

Round the walls of the courtyard and following the shade they afforded, we had arranged ends of carpet, empty saddle-bags, and the like, for the convenience of whoever might come to visit or consult the great doctor. Once for all, I beg pardon of the medical faculty for my assumed title. I had taken no degree, not even at Aberdeen. In short, it was a horrid, a most scandalous imposture, an unpardonable cheat, whatever you choose; but I could not help it. I trust that extenuating circumstances and previous good character may save me from a "prosecution according to law." True, I had seriously availed myself, during past years, of opportunities for the European study and the Asiatic practice of an amateur in the "leech's" art, and might securely trust to acquired experience for ordinary cases. The inner room on the left of the court had been decently carpeted, and there I sat in cross-legged state, with a pair of scales before me, a brass mortar, a glass ditto, and fifty or sixty boxes of drugs, with a small flanking

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line of bottles. Two Arab books of medical science by my side answered all the purposes of a diploma; of English or French "vade-mecums" I had but two, and they were concealed behind the cushion at the back, to be consulted in secret, if necessary. My companion, who did his best to look like a doctor's serving-man, sat outside near the door; his duty was to enquire of comers-in what they wanted, and to admit them one by one to the professional sanctuary. In the opposite room, to the right, a cauldron, a pile of wood, two or three melons, bread, dates, and so forth, promised something better than the purgatives and emetics on the left. We had, of course, put on our Sunday's best, that is, clean shirts, a more decent head-gear, and an upper garment or Combaz—Zaboon they here style it—in England it would pass for a flowered dressing-gown. Such was our appearance on setting up business in Ḥā'yel, while we awaited the first onset of its custom.

Nor had we long to wait. The courtyard was soon thronged with visitors, some from the palace, others from the town. One had a sick relation, whom he begged us to come and see, another some personal ailment, a third had called out of mere politeness or curiosity; in short, men of all conditions and of all ages, but for the most part open and friendly in manner, so that we could already anticipate a very speedy acquaintance with the town and whatever it contained. In order not to lose time, and to preserve at once the dignity and the popularity of our position, we concerted a methodical system, to which I adhered in every town we stopped in throughout the rest of our journey: it succeeded admirably well both for our real and apparent ends; and I shall here explain it accordingly, for the benefit of quacks, impostors, and travellers.

In the first place, it was resolved to refuse steadily all medical practice among women and small children. A measure absolutely necessary, considering the very limited bounds of our science, if we wished to avoid failure, and to husband leisure for more interesting game.

Secondly, though not till after some observation of Arab town-life, we arranged our daily occupations on a settled plan, of which I will subsequently give some description.

Thirdly, it was resolved that among the men of a reasonable

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age who should visit or apply to us, we would reject no one at first sight, but give a courteous welcome to one and all, nor let any individual go away till after drawing him out in conversation to the best of our ability; but that, at the same time, we would undertake a regular treatment of no one with whose social position, general tenor of life, and other circumstances, we should not have first rendered ourselves sufficiently familiar.

Obvious motives of prudence in a strange land might suffice to make these precautions advisable, but there was here a special reason for taking them. Arabs never, or hardly ever, pay the physician except in case of a recovery. Their way is to make from the very first a stipulation or agreement "'Ala-el-bar'," as they call it, that is, "under contingency of cure;" and offer payment in such event of a larger or smaller sum, according to the gravity, tediousness, or other circumstances of the case. Should recovery not follow, the doctor has nothing to expect.

I do not know how far this system would be relished by our own M.D.'s; though mayhap the patients might occasionally be the gainers by it. But this way of proceeding exacts, it is evident, many precautions on the part of the doctor, if he would not see his labour and fair fame speedily thrown away. Good assurance touching the character and solvency of the contracting party is, above all, necessary. Then witnesses must be called in, and the definition of what is precisely meant by "recovery" be exactly fixed, to ensure against evasion and chicane. And, lastly, the doctor, (if, at any rate, no better a one than myself, though I should be sorry to think that,) would do well to assure himself, so far as possible, of the prognosis of the disease, and if he sees the case to be an unfavourable one, let him decline it.

But since this, if done in too straightforward a way, might give the public a limited idea of his skill, he must resort to sundry little expedients, according to the circumstances before him. Thus if he sees that death is certainly imminent, let him at once declare that the Divine decrees must have their course, and that from Heaven alone can any suspension or alleviation be expected. More than once, where the signs of approaching

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dissolution, though unmistakeable enough to practised eyes and fingers, were yet of a character to escape the notice of the very unscientific bystanders, the sudden verification within a few days or hours of some similar announcement on my part, procured me a wonderful name for extraordinary science. So easy a task has *monoculus inter cœcos.*

In less ominous but still unfavourable cases, I found it an excellent plan to exact for price of cure, something very exorbitant, say, the value of ten pounds or thereabouts, and which I was confident that no Arab would dream of agreeing to; and thus get off with fair words and a steady refusal.

However, now and then I did come across some exceptionally reasonable individuals, who when informed that all the resources of art could only act as palliatives, or if they chanced to be followed by amelioration, it must be after much time and attendance, consented even thus to accept of my aid, offered a fixed sum to be paid whatever the result might be, and conscientiously kept their word. But these were very rare exceptions to a far more general rule.

My readers must already understand that to distribute medicine or to afford assistance "gratis" in the usual way, in Arabia, would be sheer madness; such a line of conduct would inevitably betray the stranger, and perhaps imply the spy. One should, on the contrary, appear more eager than any attorney after one's fees, and make it seem that they are the main or indeed the only object of one's travels.

However, whatever dexterity the real or pretended man of prescriptions may possess, he will find the Arabs of the interior queer patients, and "kittle cattle" to shoe behind or before. For although they are fairly civilized in many other respects, and do not want either clearness of perception or local knowledge, they are mere children in medical matters, and do not muster the very first data or ideas of that science. Hence their Æsculapius has need of much patience and good-humour, and even of a little innocent quackery from time to time. For his clients will look on the medicines asked for or administered as hardly less than charms expected to produce a visible and tangible amendment on the very spot, and that quite independently of any regulations respecting diet, clothing, and the like, from

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which in real fact two-thirds of success must often depend in Asia quite as much as in Europe. If after a day or two the sick man does not appear cured, or at least on the high road to being so, they will say, "We do not see any good come of it," and forthwith abandon physic and physician. In consequence it is best to adopt, when one can in conscience do it, an energetic treatment from the very outset; homœopathy and "*la médecine expectante*" would here have little success. I may add that the tough Arab fibre generally requires doses which might be almost fatal in Europe; and experience soon taught me to multiply by two most of the prescription-formulas at the end of my manual.

Perhaps my readers may wish to hear what is the exact degree of medical lore or ignorance in Modern Arabia: the more so because Arabs are not uncommonly supposed in Europe to have been if not the authors at least the restorers of the healing art.

But this is a popular error. Whatever the Eastern physicians of Bagdad, or their westerly brethren of Cordova, might know, was derived from translations of Hippocrates or Galen, from the Physics of Aristotle and the treatises of Celsus, embodied in Byzantine compilations, and the works of modern Greeks. These, rendered with more or less accuracy into the vernacular tongue, and in the hands of men who had, without exception, so far as I have been able to investigate, nothing of the Arab except that they wrote in Arabic, (much in the way that a Prussian of Dusseldorf may occasionally publish in French,) and that they professed the Mahometan belief, became at once the base and the superstructure, the alpha and the omega, of the whole science; to this their successors added nothing, unless it be some scanty and inaccurate lists of Persian, African, or Egyptian herbs; and their confused and unscientific treatises have remained to the present day the *ne plus ultra* of Arab medical learning.

But even their first glimmerings of science and of method were soon effectually closed and cross-barred by Islamitic immobility, and its misplaced supernaturalism. The traditional sayings of Mahomet, whether really his or not, but which at any rate are little calculated to give the Prophet place among the ranks of those who can heal the body, were intermixed with

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or substituted for the formulas of Galen and the precepts of Hippocrates; and to deny or evade the hygienic theories of the Meccan camel-driver might render one suspected of heresy at the least, and bring down the most awkward consequences. The fated and all-pervading interference, for such Islam makes it, of the Divine Omnipotence came in to preclude research by reducing every phenomenon at once to the one immediate universal and arbitrary cause, and thus cut every knot instead of untying it. Moreover, autopsy and anatomical studies were held, and still are so, in horror, because a violation of the rights of Munkar and Nekeer, the grave-angels; while to insist on the healing or noxious qualities of this or that, appears a downright transfer made to the creature of an honour exclusively due to the Creator. This is no exaggeration; not one of these ideas but I have heard fifty and a hundred times from orthodox and otherwise intelligent Muslims. Thus, without knowledge alike of the human frame and of the chemical pharmacopœia, precluded from experimental science, and rejecting theoretical, they came at the very outset to a dead stand, and there to the present day they have remained crystallized, one might almost say, in complacent and conscientious ignorance.

Thus much for the schools of Syria, Bagdad, Spain, and even of Egypt down to the reign of Maḥommed 'Alee. The Arabs of Arabia itself, though much freer in general from the stifling influences of Islām, which their practical good-sense rejected even where they admitted it in speculation and name, could however only learn of the medical sciences so much as its masters chose to teach them in the few torn and dingy manuscripts that might eke their way into the interior of the peninsula. Iron sharpens iron, and man's wits sharpen man's, and intercourse is the first and most essential condition of advancement. But of this, the Arabs were almost totally deprived by their isolated position girdled round by the sand sea of their country, and thus they have been left without most of those intellectual advantages which a freer communication with other nations might and would have bestowed on them. The wonder is not that they failed to acquire new civilization and learning, but that they managed to maintain their own; not that they did not advance, but that they lost so little

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ground. Less unfavourable circumstances have sufficed to sink many races into utter barbarism. Here the soil was good, but, for the sciences we are now speaking of, there was neither seed nor sower. And at last the noxious Wahhabee atmosphere, the purest azote of Mahometanism, overspread the better half of the land, to stifle what latent vitality it yet retained.

The result is what might naturally be expected. To come to particulars: senna and colocynth, both indigenous products, and whose effect on the animal economy is equally evident and energetic, are almost the only vegetable drugs used or understood. Sulphur, the sulphuret of mercury, and that of arsenic, constitute the entire ordinary list of external applications. On a certain draught derived from the cameline kingdom, and much in use among constipated Bedouins, no need to dilate. Bleeding, especially from the arm, is known, but seldom practised, few having either the skill or the instruments necessary for the operation. A friend of mine, by name Ḥannoosh, once performed it with a hatchet! and, stranger still, without cutting off the arm or causing phlebitis. One only remedy is lavishly employed, and borne with amazing patience,—the actual cautery. Whatever be the ailment, wherever the pain fixes itself, the hot iron is forthwith applied; and should an individual be so unlucky or so unadvised as to complain of pain "all over," he is pretty sure to be seamed all over also.

But ignorance would be a trifle, were it not united with a pretence to knowledge. Everyone, even the very negro slaves, have learned by rote the famous quadruple division of the human constitution; and "am I bilious? or sanguine? or lymphatic? or melancholic?" is asked by each and all, and they attach the greatest importance to the answer on this abstruse point. Any theory that they have, and no man however uninstructed can do without one altogether, is founded on the four temperaments. And accordingly the real or soi-disant doctor, whatever value he may in his own mind assign to this superannuated classification, will do well to bear it in mind, and to bring it perforce into his decisions, if he wishes not to pass for an absolute ignoramus in Nejed and Ḥā'yel.

However, the prevailing good humour and urbanity of this people, joined with their large stock of natural sound sense and

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keen though not deep observation, does much to alleviate the difficulties of the physician. So let no one despair; should London or Brussels prove unkind, a few years of Nejdean practice may perhaps mend matters.

Before leaving this subject, I must add a concluding word on the ordinary practitioners now in vogue throughout Arabia Proper. From the frontiers of Syria to the innermost valleys of Nejed is scattered a tribe of a very peculiar character and name, everywhere the same, and everywhere distinct from the surrounding clans, easily distinguishable, and well known to all conversant with the desert and its wanderers. Should any one of my readers be of this number, he will readily understand that I speak of the Ṣolibah tribe, whose very title, immediately derived as it is from Ṣaleeb, or the Cross, together with external and internal tradition, may seem to confirm their Christian origin. But this betrays itself too in other ways. Among these is their mode of life, never taking part in the wars and disputes of the remaining clans, never allying with them in marriage or otherwise; their main, indeed almost their only occupation, is the chase of ostriches and gazelles, and in this they are unrivalled. Though retaining, so far as I could discover, but very faint traces of the more positive features of Christianity, they have yet one of its negative marks in a strong unchanging hatred to Mahometanism, which they not only neglect in common with the great mass of Bedouins, but openly and positively disavow. They are evidently strangers to the Arab stem, and by their own account belong to a more northerly extraction. And in support of this, their fair complexion and open, sometimes handsome, features and light eyes show the Syrian rather than the Arabian type; while their careless gaiety of manner strongly contrasts with the cloudy and suspicious physiognomy of the wanderers among whom they live. I often fell in with these men, and mention will be made of them again in the course of this work.

Now to these same Ṣolibah Bedouins the ordinary inhabitants of the peninsula attribute a knowledge of the healing art far exceeding their own; nor, it would seem, altogether without reason. It is a common saying among Mahometans that medical science is the offspring and heritage of the Christians; and they readily avow their own inferiority in this respect. Hence they

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think it natural enough to look for it among the Ṣolibah. Of these, and of their skill, I have heard many stories, some wild enough, though not totally incredible. But having never had the good luck to see any fact of the sort with my own eyes, I do not think it advisable to prolong my tale with episodes of but a doubtful value; suffices to say that paracentesis, lithotomy, and still more difficult operations worthy of an Astley Cooper or a Brodie, have been often in my hearing ascribed to the Ṣolibah surgeons, and that with such circumstantial detail in the narrative as to give it at least an air of truth, besides medical treatments of all kinds and qualities for sundry and complicated diseases. So that I really suppose the reputation of this errant faculty to be somehow founded in fact.

Besides these rather mysterious practitioners, Mughrabee and Belooch quacks occasionally wander over the peninsula, and profess to heal, but with little success either for the bodies of their patients or for their own pockets. I never heard them well spoken of, nor should I indeed have expected it.

What has been now said may be enough to give an idea of the line we had to hold in our simulated profession. Throughout the remainder of our travels, we kept up our medical character, making it our exclusive title of introduction among whatever people we had to deal with, and never permitted anyone of low or high degree to know anything else of us, unless some very peculiar circumstances rendered an opposite conduct necessary or expedient in individual instances, one of which happened in fact only a few weeks later.

The nature of our occupations now led to a certain daily routine, though it was often agreeably diversified by incidental occurrences. Perhaps a leaf taken at random from my journal, now regularly kept, may serve to set before my readers a tolerable sample of our ordinary course of life and society at Ḥā'yel, while it will at the same time give a more distinct idea of the town and people than we have yet supplied. It is, besides, a pleasure to retrace the memories of a pleasant time, and such on the whole was ours here; and I trust that the reader will not be wholly devoid of some share in my feelings.

Be it, then, the 10th of August, whose jotted notes I will put together and fill up the blanks. I might equally have taken

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the 9th or the 11th, they are all much the same; but the day I have chosen looks a little the closer written of the two, and for that sole reason I prefer giving it; nor does it seem to me devoid of calm and real though not stirring interest. However, for the consolation of those who delight in recitals of desperate battles, grisly murder, and all that, I forewarn that an episode thick-set with these agreeable and soul-stirring events must of necessity be introduced into its course like a crimson patch on a ground of quiet green.

On that day, then, in 1862, about a fortnight after our establishment at Ḥā'yel, and when we were, in consequence, fully inured to our town existence, Seleem Abou Maḥmood-el-'Eys and Barakāt-esh-Shāmee, that is, my companion and myself, rose, not from our beds, for we had none, but from our roof-spread carpets, and took advantage of the silent hour of the first faint dawn, while the stars yet kept watch in the sky over the slumbering inhabitants of Shomer, to leave the house for a cool and undisturbed walk ere the sun should arise and man go forth unto his work and to his labour. We locked the outer door, and then passed into the still twilight gloom down the cross-street leading to the market-place, which we next followed up to its farther or south-western end, where large folding-gates separate it from the rest of the town. The wolfish city-dogs, whose bark and bite too render walking the streets at night a rather precarious business, now tamely stalked away in the gloaming, while here and there a crouching camel, the packages yet on his back, and his sleeping driver close by, awaited the opening of the warehouse at whose door they had passed the night. Early though it was, the market-gates were already unclosed, and the guardian sat wakeful in his niche. On leaving the market we had yet to go down a broad street of houses and gardens cheerfully intermixed, till at last we reached the western wall of the town, or, rather, of the new quarter added by 'Abd-Allah, where the high portal between round flanking towers gave us issue on the open plain, blown over at this hour by a light gale of life and coolness. To the west, but some four or five miles distant, rose the serrated mass of Djebel Shomer, throwing up its black fantastic peaks, now reddened by the reflected dawn, against the lead-

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blue sky. Northward the same chain bends round till it meets the town, and then stretches away for a length of ten or twelve days' journey, gradually losing in height on its approach to Meshid 'Alee and the valley of the Euphrates. On our south we have a little isolated knot of rocks, and far off the extreme ranges of Djebel Shomer or 'Āja', to give it its historical name, intersected by the broad passes that lead on in the same direction to Djebel Solma. Behind us lies the capital. Ṭelāl's palace, with its high oval keep, houses, gardens, walls, and towers, all coming out black against the ruddy bars of eastern light, and behind, a huge pyramidical peak almost overhanging the town, and connected by lower rocks with the main mountain range to north and south, those stony ribs that protect the central heart of the kingdom. In the plain itself we can just distinguish by the doubtful twilight several blackish patches irregularly scattered over its face, or seen as though leaning upward against its craggy verge; these are the gardens and country-houses of 'Obeyd and other chiefs, besides hamlets and villages, such as Kefar and 'Aḍwah, with their groves of palm and "Ithel" (a tree which I will describe farther on), now blended in the dusk. One solitary traveller on his camel, a troop of jackals sneaking off to their rocky caverns, a few dingy tents of Shomer Bedouins, such are the last details of the landscape. Far away over the southern hills beams the glory of Canopus, and announces a new Arab year; the pole-star to the north lies low over the mountain tops.

We pace the pebble-strewn flat to the south, till we leave behind us the length of the town wall, and reach the little cluster of rocks already mentioned. We scramble up to a sort of niche near its summit, whence, at a height of a hundred feet or more, we can overlook the whole extent of the plain and wait the sunrise. Yet before the highest crags of Shomer are gilt with its first rays, or the long giant shadows of the easterly chain have crossed the level, we see groups of peasants, who drawing their fruit and vegetable-laden asses before them, issue like little bands of ants from the mountain gorges around, and slowly approach on the tracks converging to the capital. Horsemen from the town ride out to the gardens, and a long line of camels on the westerly Medinah road winds up towards Ḥā'yel. We

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wait ensconced in our rocky look-out and enjoy the view till the sun has risen, and the coolness of the night air warms rapidly into the sultry day; it is time to return. So we quit our solitary perch, and descend to the plain, where keeping in the shadow of the western fortifications we regain the town gate and thence the market. There all is now life and movement; some of the warehouses, filled with rice, flour, spices, or coffee, and often concealing in their inner recesses stores of the prohibited American weed, are already open; we salute the owners while we pass, and they return a polite and friendly greeting. Camels are unloading in the streets, and Bedouins standing by, looking anything but at home in the town. The shoemaker and the blacksmith, those two main props of Arab handicraft, are already at their work, and some gossiping by-standers are collected around them. At the corner where our cross street falls into the market-place, three or four country women are seated, with piles of melons, gourds, egg-plant fruits, and the other garden produce before them for sale. My companion falls a haggling with one of these village nymphs, and ends by obtaining a dozen "badinjans" and a couple of water melons, each bigger than a man's head, for the equivalent of an English twopence. With this purchase we return home, where we shut and bolt the outer door, then take out of a flat basket what has remained from over night of our wafer-like Ḥā'yel bread, and with this and a melon make a hasty breakfast. I say a hasty one, for although it is only half an hour after sunrise, repeated knocks at our portal show the arrival of patients and visitors: early rising being here the fashion, and reason must wherever artificial lighting is scanty. However, we do not at once open to our friends, nor will they take offence at the delay, but remain where they are chatting together before our door till we admit them; of so little value is time here. Our drink is water, for which we address ourselves to a goat-skin filled from the neighbouring well by Fatimah, daughter of our landlord Ḥasan-el-Miṣree, and suspended against the wall in the shady corner of the court. We untie its mouth where it hangs, and let out the contents into a very rude but strong brass cup of town manufacture, and with this teetotaller draught content ourselves. I hardly know why we had not yet begun

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at Ḥā'yel to make our own coffee; we became better housekeepers in the after course of the journey. We then arrange the carpets, and I retire to my doctoral seat within, taking care to have the scales and an Arab book in ostentatious evidence before me, while Barakāt-esh-Shāmee opens the entrance.

In comes a young man of good appearance, clad in the black cloak common to all of the middle or upper classes in central Arabia; in his hand he bears a wand of the Sidr or lotos-wood. A silver-hilted sword and a glistering Ḳafee'yah announce him to be a person of some importance, while his long black ringlets, handsome features and slightly olive complexion, with a tall stature and easy gait, declare him native of Djebel Shomer, and townsman of Ḥā'yel; it is 'Ojeyl, the eldest born of a large family, and successor to the comfortable house and garden of his father not long since deceased, in a quarter of the town some twenty minutes' walk distant. He leads by the hand his younger brother, a modest-looking lad of fair complexion and slim make, but almost blind, and evidently out of health also. After passing through the preliminary ceremonies of introduction to Barakāt, he approaches my recess, and standing without, salutes me with the greatest deference. Thinking him a desirable acquaintance, I receive him very graciously, and he begs me to see what is the matter with his brother, describing to me all the boy's various ailments with much exactness, though with scrupulous decorum in the choice of words, a point in which the Arabs of the towns are remarkably skilful, unless perhaps when they choose to be rude on purpose. I examine the case, and find it to be within the limits of my skill, nor likely to require more than a very simple course of treatment. Accordingly I make my bargain for the chances of recovery, and find 'Ojeyl docile to the terms proposed, and with little disposition, all things considered, to backwardness in payment. Arabs, indeed, are in general close in driving a bargain and open in downright giving; they will chaffer half a day about a penny, while they will throw away the worth of pounds on the first asker. But 'Ojeyl was one of the best specimens of the Ḥā'yel character, and of the clan Ṭā'i, renowned in all times for their liberal ways and high sense of honour. I next proceed to administer to my patient

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such drugs as his state requires, and he receives them with that air of absolute and half religious confidence which well-educated Arabs show to their physician, whom they regard as possessed of an almost sacred and supernatural power—a feeling, by the way, hardly less advantageous to the patient than to the practitioner, and which may often contribute much to the success of the treatment.

During the rest of my stay at Ḥā'yel, 'Ojeyl continued to be one of my best friends, I had almost said disciples; our mutual visits were frequent, and always pleasing and hearty. His brother's cure, which followed in less than a fortnight, confirmed his attachment, nor had I reason to complain of scantiness in his retribution. From him also I obtained what I valued much more, namely, considerable information about the political and religious state of the "past and present" of Shomer; I will give it interwoven into the course of the narrative when occasion offers.

Meanwhile the courtyard has become full of visitors. Close by my door I see the intelligent and demurely-smiling face of 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, where he sits between two pretty and well-dressed boys; they are the two elder children of Ṭelāl, Bedr and Bander; their guardsman, a negro slave with a handsome cloak and sword, is seated a little lower down. Farther on are two townsmen, one armed, the other with a wand at his side. A rough good-natured youth of a bronzed complexion, and whose dingy clothes bespeak his mechanical profession, is talking with another of a dress somewhat different in form and coarser in material than that usually worn in Ḥā'yel; this latter must be a peasant from some one of the mountain villages. Two Bedouins, ragged and uncouth like all their compeers, have straggled in with the rest; while a tall dark-featured youth, with a gilded hilt to his sword, and more silk about him than a Wahhabee would approve, has taken his place opposite to 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and is trying to draw him into conversation. But this last has asked Barakāt to lend him one of my Arabic books to read, and is deeply engaged in its perusal.

'Ojeyl has taken leave, and I give the next turn of course to 'Abd-el-Maḥsin. He informs me that Ṭelāl has sent me his two sons Bedr and Bander that I may examine their state of

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health, and see if they require doctoring. This is in truth a little stroke of policy on Ṭelāl's part, who knows equally with myself that the boys are perfectly well and want nothing at all. But he wishes to give us a mark of his confidence, and at the same time to help us in establishing our medical reputation in the town; for though by no means himself persuaded of the reality of our doctoral title, he understands the expediency of saving appearances before the public.

Well, the children are passed in review with all the seriousness due to a case of heart-complaint or brain-fever, while at a wink from me, Barakāt prepares in the kitchen a draught of cinnamon water, which with sugar, named medicine for the occasion, pleases the young heirs of royalty and keeps up the farce; 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, like the Chorus in Euripides, expatiating all the time to the bystanders on the wonderful skill with which I have at once discovered the ailments and their cure, and the small boys thinking that if this be medicine, they will do their best to be ill for it every day.

'Abd-el-Maḥsin now commits them to the negro, who, however, before taking them back to the palace, has his own story to tell of some personal ache, for which I prescribe without stipulating for payment, since he belongs to the palace, where it is important to have the greatest number of friends possible, even on the back-stairs. But 'Abd-el-Maḥsin remains, reading, chatting, quoting poetry, and talking history, recent events, natural philosophy, religion, or medicine, as the case may be.

But let us see some of the other patients. The gold-hilted swordsman has naturally a special claim on our attention. It is the son of Rosheyd, Ṭelāl's maternal uncle. His palace stands on the other side of the way, exactly opposite to our house; and I will say nothing more of him for the present, intending to pay him afterwards a special visit, and thus become more thoroughly acquainted with the whole family.

Next let us take notice of those two townsmen who are conversing, or rather "chaffing," together. Though both in plain apparel, and much alike in stature and features, there is yet much about them to distinguish the two; one has a civilian look, the other a military. He of the wand is no less a personage than Moḥammed-el-Ḳāḍee, chief justice of Ḥā'yel,

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and of course a very important individual in the town. However his exterior is that of an elderly unpretentious little man, and one, in spite of the proverb which attributes gravity to judges, very fond of a joke, besides being a tolerable representative of what may here be called the moderate party, neither participating in the fanaticism of the Wahhabee, nor yet, like the most of the indigenous chiefs, hostile to Mahometanism; he takes his cue from the court direction, and is popular with all factions because belonging properly to none.

He requires some medical treatment for himself, and some for his son, a big heavy lad with a swollen arm, who has accompanied him hither. Here too is a useful acquaintance, well up to all the scandal and small-talk of the town, and willing to communicate it. Our visits were frequent, and I found his house well stored with books, partly manuscript, partly printed in Egypt, and mainly on legal or religious subjects. Among those of the latter description were, by way of example, a collection of Khoṭbahs or sermons for all the Fridays in the year, and the Lives of the Prophets from Seth downwards, written with an historical accuracy and critical discernment worthy of the stories of Baron Munchausen or Jack and the Beanstalk. Moḥammed was a great talker, and exercised on all matters a freedom of remark common though not peculiar to men of the legal profession; he became in short our "daily news" for court intrigue and city gossip, what had been said in public, and what done in private, who ran away with whom, and so forth. Yet on the whole the portrait he thus laid before us of Ḥā'yel and its inhabitants, noble or commoners, was a favourable one, more so perhaps than could be in justice given of most capitals. This might be the result of the character of those tribes who, as Arab annals have it, coalesced into the present population, namely, Ṭā'i and Wā'il, with their kindred clans, and who were, so fame assures us, the flower of Arab enterprise and generosity, the most affable in peace, the most daring in war, and the most honourable at all times amid the inhabitants of Nejed and Upper Arabia. In later ages the civilization of town-life has cast an agreeable varnish over their rougher qualities, while that civilization itself is of too simple a character to render them artificial or corrupt.

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Of the country folks in the villages around, like Mogah, Delhemee'eh, and the rest, Moḥammed-el-Ḳāḍee used to speak with a sort of half-contemptuous pity, much like a Parisian talking of Low Bretons; in fact, the difference between these rough and sturdy boors, and the more refined inhabitants of the capital, is, all due proportion allowed, no less remarkable here than in Europe itself. We will now let one of them come forward in his own behalf, and my readers shall be judges.

It is accordingly a stout clown from Mogah, scantily dressed in working wear, and who has been occupied for the last half-hour in tracing sundry diagrams on the ground before him with a thick peach-tree switch, thus to pass his time till his betters shall have been served. He now edges forward, and taking his seat in front of the door, calls my attention with an "I say, doctor." Whereon I suggest to him that his bulky corporation not being formed of glass or any other transparent material, he has by his position entirely intercepted whatever little light my recess might enjoy. He apologizes, and shuffles an inch or two sideways. Next I enquire what ails him, not without some curiosity to hear the answer, so little does the herculean frame before me announce disease. Whereto Do'eymis, or whatever may be his name, replies, "I say, I am all made up of pain." This statement, like many others, appears to me rather too general to be literally true. So I proceed in my interrogatory: "Does your head pain you?" "No." (I might have guessed that; these fellows never feel what our cross-Channel friends entitle "*le mal des beaux esprits.*") "Does your back ache?" "No." "Your arms?" "No." "Your legs?" "No." "Your body?" "No." "But," I conclude, "if neither your head nor your body, back, arms, or legs pain you, how can you possibly be such a composition of suffering?" "I am all made up of pain, doctor," replies he, manfully intrenching himself within his first position. The fact is, that there is really something wrong with him, but he does not know how to localize his sensations. So I push forward my enquiries, till it appears that our man of Mogah has a chronic rheumatism; and on ulterior investigation, conducted with all the skill that Barakāt and I can jointly muster, it comes out that three or four months before he had an attack

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of the disease in its acute form, accompanied by high fever, since which he has never been himself again.

This might suffice for the diagnosis, but I wish to see how he will find his way out of more intricate questions; besides, the townsmen sitting by, and equally alive to the joke with myself, whisper "Try him again." In consequence, I proceed with "What was the cause of your first illness?" "I say, doctor, its cause was God," replies the patient. "No doubt of that," say I; "all things are caused by God: but what was the particular and immediate occasion?" "Doctor, its cause was God, and, secondly, that I ate camel's flesh when I was cold," rejoins my scientific friend. "But was there nothing else?" I suggest, not quite satisfied with the lucid explanation just given. "Then, too, I drank camel's milk; but it was all, I say, from God, doctor," answers he.

Well, I consider the case, and make up my mind regarding the treatment. Next comes the grand question of payment, which must be agreed on beforehand, and rendered conditional on success, as my readers know. I enquire what he will give me on recovery. "Doctor," answers the peasant, "I will give you, do you hear? I say, I will give you a camel." But I reply that I do not want one. "I say, remember God," which being interpreted here means, "do not be unreasonable; I will give you a fat camel, every one knows my camel; if you choose, I will bring witnesses, I say." And while I persist in refusing the proffered camel, he talks of butter, meal, dates, and suchlike equivalents.

There is a patient and a paymaster for you. However, all ends by his behaving reasonably enough; he follows my prescriptions with the ordinary docility, gets well, and gives me for my pains an eighteenpenny fee.

So pass two or three hours, during which the remaining visitors already mentioned take each their turn, others come and go, and the sun nears the zenith. For brevity's sake, I pass on at once to the mechanic, who, after long waiting in the shade with genuine Arab patience, now advances, and with a good-natured grin on his broad features begs me to accompany him to his house, where his brother is lying ill of a fever. After a short conversation, I direct Barakāt to stay at home till

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my return, and gratify my petitioner by consenting to his invitation.

Small of stature, dusky in complexion, strongly built, and with a sly expression about his face which resembles almost strikingly that of Murillo's Spanish beggar-boy, Doheym (literally "blacky,") may stand for a not unfair specimen of a large class among the central Nejdean population. Partly from a desire of increasing gain, partly from dislike to Wahhabee puritanism, his family has not long since emigrated northward from Ḳaseem to Ḥā'yel, where they have fixed their residence, but still retain many of the distinctive ways and habits of their native district. Such immigrations have of late become very common, and have greatly contributed to the numerical and military strength of Djebel Shomer, while they add much to its industrial and commercial prosperity. My readers will perhaps call to mind Louis XIV and the repeal of the Nantes edict, and add one parallel more between Arabia and Europe. For the civilization of Ḳaseem is of ancient date, and its inhabitants possess traditional skill in all kinds of handicraft and trade, far superior to anything found among the recently organized tribes of the north, while the memories of former independence, protracted wars and victories, have given to their character a steadiness and resolution in all their undertakings very unlike the unsustained though dashing bravery of the north, formed in brief forays and in Bedouin feuds. The good-natured and social disposition common to Arabs in general has been also fostered among them by centuries of city and town life till it occasionally attains the level of sprightliness, while it bestows on them a more decided turn of ease and urbanity in their conversation than is general in Shomer and its dependencies. It is natural enough that such men should for the most succeed well in obtaining easy admittance and speedy success in a strange land, though they readily after a short sojourn avail themselves of any good opportunity for returning to their native country, a land favoured both by nature and art much more than the stony precincts of Ḥā'yel and the rough sierras of Sulma and 'Ăja'.

Doheym takes up his thin black cloak, and wraps it round him in folds that a sculptor might admire, and out we set together. As we go on to the Sooḳ, he nods and smiles to some

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fifty acquaintances, or stops a moment to interchange a few words with those of his own land. The market-place is now crowded from end to end; townsmen, villagers, Bedouins, some seated at the doors of the warehouses and driving a bargain with the owners inside, some gathered in idle groups, gossiping over the news of the hour. For the tongue is here what printed paper is in Europe, and I doubt whether an Arab loses more time in hearing and retailing the occurrences of the day than an Englishman every morning over his "Times," although the latter has at least the advantage of looking the more studious. I might here enter on a most interesting investigation touching the comparative amount of individual and of united action in the East and West, whereby it should appear by way of conclusion that the Occidental has much more the advantage over the Oriental hemisphere in the combination of work than in the quantity of the work itself gone through. Thus it might be shown that an Arab and an Englishman, take them man for man, perform each about the same portion of day's-work in the twenty-four hours, with this difference, that the Arab works for himself and by himself, while the Englishman works for society, and with all the assistance and durability of result that society affords, like one who builds with cement and mortar, compared with him who merely piles up loose stones on stones. This and more; but I should tire my reader's patience, while he stands by me in the dust and sun of a Ḥā'yel forenoon, with a Gladstone or a Bright oration on the use of combined labour, even had I their mastery of words and command of the subject.

Groups of lading and unlading camels block up the path; I look right and left; there within the shops I see one merchant laboriously summing up his accounts (I know not whether the Arabs were ever good mathematicians, certainly at present a simple reckoning of addition poses nine out of the ten); another, for want of customers, is reading in some old dog-eared manuscript of prayers, or of natural history, or of geography—such geography, where almost all the world except Arabia is filled up with "Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders." The Coran is little dealt in here, "thank God for that;" but the Shiya'ees of Meshid 'Alee may per-

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chance have in their hands some small illuminated treatise on the imaginary excellencies of 'Alee or one of his family, or very likely a most unscriptural, or more truly antiscriptural narrative of the amours of Joseph with Zuleykha, Potiphar's traditionary wife; the history of David's frailties, wherein the monarch's fault is made to consist not, as some innocently suppose, in taking his neighbour's wife, but in the extravagance of adding a hundredth to the ninety-nine he is supposed to have already, but lawfully, possessed, and suchlike edifying tales. For to idolize 'Alee and his race, and to wallow in the swine-trough of sensuality, is the *dernier mot* and turning point of Shiya'ee doctrine and practice.

Mixed with the city crowd, swordsmen and gaily-dressed negroes, for the negro is always a dandy when he can afford it, belonging mostly to the palace, are now going about their affairs, and claim a certain amount of deference from the vulgar cits, though we see nothing here of the Agha and Basha style of the overbearing and despotic Turk. Nor do these government men ever dream of taking aught without purchase, or of compelling those they can lay hold of to gratuitous labour, Ottoman fashion; such proceedings, also, being repugnant to that independent high-mindedness which stamps the genuine Arab caste. The well-dressed chieftain and noble jostles on amid the plebeian crowd on terms of astounding familiarity, and elbows or is elbowed by the artisan and the porter; while the court officers themselves meet with that degree of respect alone which indicates deference rather than inferiority in those who pay it. A gay and busy scene; the morning air in the streets yet retains just sufficient coolness to render tolerable the bright rays of the sun, and everywhere is that atmosphere of peace, security, and thriving known to the visitors of inner Arabia, and almost or wholly unknown to the Syrian or Anatolian traveller. Should you listen to the hum of discourse around, you will never hear a curse, an imprecation, or a quarrel, but much business, repartee, and laughter. Doheym and I slowly pick out our way through the crowd amid many greetings on either hand, till we reach the open space of the palace court where the Sook falls into it; and thence we pass through the high gateway, and enter the main artery of the town.

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It is a broad and level road, having on its left the walls of the palace gardens, overtopped here and there by young date trees, for this plantation is quite recent, and the work of the present reign only; on its right a succession of houses, scattered among gardens of older growth and denser vegetation; the trees overhang the walls, and we are glad to avail ourselves of their deep dark shade. Doheym entertains me with descriptions of Nejed and Ḳaseem, and extols in no measured terms the land of his birth; he has seen too the Wahhabee monarch in person, though not in Riaḍ his capital. Thus we beguile a quarter of an hour's leisurely walk (it were superfluous to say that no one hurries his pace in these semi-tropical regions, especially in the month of August), till we reach an open space behind the palace garden, where a large and deep excavation announces the Maslakhah, or slaughter-house (literally "skinning place") of the town butchers. In any other climate such an establishment would be an intolerable nuisance to all neighbours if thus placed within the city limits, and right in the centre of gardens and habitations. But here the dryness of the atmosphere is such that no ill consequence follows; putrefaction being effectually anticipated by the parching influence of the air, which renders a carcass of three or four days' standing as inoffensive to the nose as a leather drum; and one may pass leisurely by a recently deceased camel on the road-side, and almost take it for a specimen prepared with arsenic and spirits for an anatomical museum.

At this point the street leads off to the interior of the capital. The part hitherto traversed on our walk is the new quarter, and dates almost entirely from the accession of the actual dynasty; but now we are to enter on the original town of Ḥā'yel, where everything announces considerable though not remote antiquity. The two main quarters which form the old city are divided by a long road, narrower and less regular than that we have yet followed. Nor was this line of demarcation more to indicate a division of the buildings than of the inhabitants, split up as they formerly were by civil and internecine hostility. But to this the strong hand of Ebn-Rasheed has at last put an end. Right and left crossways, branching out off the main path, lead to side streets and lesser subdivisions. We take a very narrow

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and winding lane on the right, by which Doheym leads me awhile through a labyrinth of gardens, wells, and old irregular houses, till we reach a cluster of buildings, and a covered gallery, conducting us through its darkness to the sun-glare of a broad road, bordered by houses on either side, though a low court wall and outer door, generally intervenes between them and the street itself. The arch is here unknown, and the portals are all of timber-work enclosed in brick, and equally rough and solid in construction. My guide stops before one such and knocks. "Samm'" ("come in") is heard from within-side, and immediately afterwards some one comes up and draws back the inner bolt. We now stand in a courtyard, where two or three small furnaces, old metal pots and pans of various sizes, some enormously big—for the Arabs pique themselves now, like their ancestors of two thousand years since, in having cauldrons large enough to boil an entire sheep—sheets of copper, bars of iron, and similar objects, proclaim an Arab smithy. Some brawny, half-naked youths covered with soot and grime come up to present a shake of their unwashed hands, while they exchange Nejdean jokes with Doheym. His elder brother So'eyd, whose gravity as head of the family has been a little ruffled by the sportiveness of his younger relatives, rebukes the juveniles, hastens to purify his own face and hands, and then introduces me to the interior of the house, where in a darkened room lies another brother, the sick man on whose behalf I have been summoned; he is in a high fever and hardly able to speak, though there is fortunately no immediate danger. I take my seat by the patient and address a few preliminary questions to the bystanders, intermixed with hopeful prognostics, while the sick man tries to look cheerful, and shows that he expected my coming to see him, and is pleased at it. To put out the tongue even unasked, and to hold forth the hand that the doctor may feel the pulse, are customary proceedings here; but if you do not wish to pass for an ignoramus, you must successively try both wrists, either radial being supposed entirely independent of its fellow, and each with a separate story to tell; whence my readers may deduce that the real theory of the circulation of the blood is equally unknown with the name of Harvey. When I have

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played my part, the elder brother takes me aside and enquires about the diagnosis and prognosis, or, in plain English, what is the matter, and what may be the consequences. On my guarded reply, he promises compliance with whatever I may prescribe, and then invites me to sit down and take coffee before any further doctorings. I show a desire of at once getting things in order for the patient, but the patient himself in a low voice, eked out with signs, indicates his wish that I should first and foremost partake of their hospitality. Were he actually dying I doubt whether matters could hold another course in these countries. So dates are brought, pipes are lighted, Doheym prepares coffee, and the room in which (mind you) the sick man is lying, fills with visitors. Seclusion makes no part of Arab treatment; on the contrary it is considered almost a sacred duty to visit and enliven the sufferer by the most numerous and the most varied society that can be got together. The Arab invalid himself has no idea of being left alone; to be kept in company is all his desire; nay, the same system is observed even when death occurs in a family, and the survivor's nearest of kin, son, wife, or husband, keep open house for many days after in order to receive the greatest amount of consolatory calls possible, so that the solitude of woe has few advocates here.

My readers, conversant, I doubt not, with the scenes and the injunctions of the Old and of the New Testament also, may here recall to mind many an example and many an apophthegm to this same purport, in the book of Job and elsewhere.

In Doheym's house the visitors are mainly natives of Ḳaseem, or Upper Nejed. It was easy to perceive from their bearing and from the tone of their conversation that the inhabitants of the above-named provinces were no less superior to those of Djebel Shomer in whatever is understood by civilization and general culture, than the Shomerites to those of Djowf, or the people of Djowf to the Bedouins. Indeed, if my readers will draw a diagonal line across the map of Arabia from north-west to south-east, following the direction of my actual journey through that country, and then distinguish the several regions of the peninsula by belts of colour brightening while they represent the respective degrees of advancement in arts, com-

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merce, and their kindred acquirements, on the Dupin system, they will have for the darkest line that nearest to the north, or Wadi Serḥān, while the Djowf, Djebel Shomer, Nejed, Ḥaṣa, and their dependencies, grow lighter in succession more and more, till the belt corresponding to 'Omān should show the cheerfullest tint of all. In fact, it is principally owing to the circumstance that the northern and western parts of Arabia have been hitherto those almost exclusively visited by travellers, that the idea of Arab barbarism or Bedouinism has found such general acceptance in Europe; the centre and the east of what lies between the Red Sea and the Gulf of 'Omān would have supplied a much more favourable criterion. But I anticipate: let us return to our hosts and their friends.

Here we are now in Ḥā'yel, yet in the midst of Nejdean politics and debate, where the bigotry and tyranny of the Wahhabee meet with oft-recurring and cordial detestation. The siege of 'Oneyzah, its latest news, conjectures, hopes and fears relative to its duration and result, are the chief topic of conversation. Already, indeed, when hardly beyond the boundaries of the Djowf, had we heard of that great event of the Arabian day. But here it was the all-engrossing subject of anxious enquiry and speculation, and the real though disguised cause of the frequent visits paid by the chiefs of Ḳaseem to Ṭelāl, and of their endless rendezvous in the apartments of 'Abd-el-Maḥsin. To render this matter intelligible, and to serve also for a key to much which must needs be alluded to hereafter, I will now briefly sketch what was at the very time passing in Ḳaseem, with the necessary supplement of the previous circumstances that brought on the memorable events of 1862 and 1863 in central Arabia, events to be long remembered and deeply deplored.

When Feyṣul, the reigning monarch of the Wahhabee or Ebn-Sa'ood dynasty, returned for the third time in 1843 or 1844 (for I am not sure of the precise date) to his native Nejed and hereditary throne, he found in the rich and populous province of Ḳaseem his foremost auxiliaries for re-establishing his sway and expelling the last remnants of Egyptian occupation. The indwellers of this district took the opportunity of incorporating themselves into the great

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Wahhabee empire; more, however, from hatred to the stranger Bashas of Egypt than from any particular sympathy with the natives of Nejed, against whom, indeed, they had often waged war in former times. They now consented to furnish Feyṣul with an annual contingent of tribute, and of troops also, should such be required, but on condition of non-interference with their own indigenous chiefs, municipal administration, and local customs. Matters continued on this footing for seven or eight years, till Feyṣul, after having not only thoroughly secured his supremacy over the central provinces, namely, Sedeyr, Woshem, 'Aareḍ, Yemāmah, Ḥareeḳ, Aflaj, and Dowāsir, but also conquered Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef, besides considerable successes obtained in the direction of Baḥreyn and 'Omān, felt at last the sceptre strong enough in his hand to crush the surviving liberties of Ḳaseem, and to reduce its chiefs and people to that degree of servitude which in Wahhabee eyes is the only fitting condition of all except the true "Muslemeen" or Mahometans, that is, of course, of all men but themselves.

The first and principal step in this direction was to annihilate the great families that had from time immemorial ruled in Ḳaseem, or at least to deprive them of all authority and power. Now the two most important towns in that province were Bereydah and 'Oneyzah, whose respective chieftains exercised an undisputed influence over the third emporium of commerce, namely, the town of Rass, and over the fifty or sixty other towns and villages scattered throughout the land. The nobles of Bereydah, amongst whom was our friend 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, belonged to the family of 'Aleyy'ān, those of 'Oneyzah to that of 'Āṭee'yah. But Bereydah was somewhat lesser in importance, and inferior in numerical strength and in wealth to her sister town; in antiquity I believe them equal. The inhabitants of 'Oneyzah are reckoned at about thirty thousand souls, those of Bereydah between twenty and twenty-five thousand. Against the latter town Feyṣul directed his first efforts, trusting here to find an easier prey.

He picked a quarrel with the 'Aleyy'ān chieftains, and harassed them for a while by continual forays under the command of his eldest son, the talented but ferocious and unprincipled 'Abd-Allah. A considerable period thus passed in desultory

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attack and delusive truce, till the nobles of Bereydah, finding their commerce almost cut off, and their strength unequal to the contest, began to desire peace at whatever price. In reply to their embassies Feyṣul sent them word, not by 'Abd-Allah, whose position as heir-apparent gives an official character to whatever passes in his name, but by his third son Moḥammed, that he pardoned their rebellion, and invited them to Riaḍ, where suitable terms of pacification should be arranged between both parties. But the message was verbal only, and without a sufficient guarantee in the person of him who delivered it, and the 'Aleyy'ānṣ hung back awhile, suspecting, and with good cause, some hidden snare. However, their hesitation was at last overcome by repeated assurances of safe-conduct and honourable treatment, backed by a written summons bearing the signature of the heir-apparent, 'Abd-Allah himself, and in which the name of God was solemnly invoked to attest that neither guile nor treachery lurked under his own and his father's invitation. Then in an evil hour 'Oley', the chief of Bereydah, accompanied by two of his sons and several other near kinsmen, set out for Riaḍ, escorted by Moḥammed.

Ten days at an easy travelling pace separate Bereydah from the capital of Nejed. The 'Aleyy'ān nobles were received with the distinction due to their rank all the way, till they reached Riaḍ; where, to their great surprise, they found no one ready to meet them according to Arab custom without the walls. Moḥammed apologized, and said that his brother 'Abd-Allah was doubtless taken up in preparing a fit place for their reception, and that they would find him within waiting for them at his palace-door. Whatever suspicions might arise in the minds of the victims were now unavailing; it was too late either to attempt flight or to parley on conditions. Surrounded by a crowd of the fanatical denizens of Riaḍ, the 'Aleyy'ānṣ reached the outer gate of 'Abd-Allah's best residence. Before it in the street was 'Abd-Allah himself on horseback, surrounded by armed retainers. Hardly had he seen 'Oley's approach, than he hastily turned his horse and re-entered the portal, without waiting to receive the salutation of his guests. They followed; but 'Abd-Allah had already concealed himself from view in an inner apartment, and in his place they found the courtyard

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filled with armed men and drawn swords. The doors were immediately barred behind them, and the massacre began.

'Oley', his eldest son, and all his relatives and companions, were cut to pieces on the spot, and their blood overflowed the threshold of their perfidious host. The younger son of the ill-starred chieftain was alone reserved alive, as hostage for those of the family who yet remained in Ḳaseem.

Without a moment's delay 'Abd-Allah and his murderous band set out for that province, where the arrival of the traitor almost outstripped the news of his treachery. He fell at once on the town of Bereydah, now in the confusion of recent terror, and involved all whom he could seize of the 'Aleyy'ān family in the fate of their relatives at Riaḍ. A few, amongst whom was 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, escaped the sword: their heads were set at a price. The townsmen, thus deprived of their chieftains, submitted after a brief struggle, and a native of Riaḍ, Mohanna by name, was appointed governor of Bereydah in quality of vice-gerent of Feyṣul, but with almost absolute power. When all opposition seemed thus at an end, 'Abd-Allah gave orders for putting to death the only surviving son of 'Oley', whom he had hitherto retained in prison; and then, profiting by the consternation spread throughout Ḳaseem, attempted to strike a final and decisive blow at 'Oneyzah itself.

That large town had been for centuries the capital of the province, or rather of a full third of Arabia, namely, of what we may call its north-western centre. Its commerce with Medinah and Mecca on the one hand, and with Nejed, nay, even with Damascus and Bagdad, on the other, had gathered in its warehouses stores of traffic unknown to any other locality of inner Arabia, and its hardy merchants were met with alike on the shores of the Red Sea and of the Persian Gulf, and occasionally on the more distant banks of the Euphrates, or by the waters of Damascus. Meanwhile the martial and energetic character of its population prevented a too exclusive predominance of the commercial over the military spirit, and the warriors of 'Oneyzah had twice at a recent period been seen beneath the walls of Bahholah in the very heart of 'Omān, though separated from them by three months' distance of Arab march. 'Oneyzah itself boasted a double enclosure of fortifications, unbaked

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brickwork it is true, but in their height and thickness no less formidable to Arab besiegers in their present state of obsidionary science, than the defences of Antwerp or of Badajoz to a European army. The outer circle of walls, with its trench and towers, protected the gardens, while the inner range surrounded the compact mass of the town itself. Here a young and courageous chief Zāmil, or, to give him the name by which he is often familiarly styled, Zoweymil-el-'Āṭeeyah, was adored by his fellow-citizens and subjects for his gentleness and liberality in peace, and his daring in war. His head officer or lieutenant, a mulatto called El-Khey'yāṭ, was hardly less renowned for his skill and valour. And the fighting men of 'Oneyzah and its dependent villages, reckoned at five thousand matchlocks, with an equal or greater number of mercenary troops, collected chiefly from among the Bedouins of the surrounding districts, and especially from the powerful tribes of Ḥarb and 'Oṭeybah, were all in readiness at the bidding of Zāmil and his council.

'Abd-Allah tried a sudden and violent assault, but was repulsed. He sent word to his father Feyṣul, who in all speed collected the whole force of Upper Nejed, and marched with them in person to 'Oneyzah, hoping by this juncture of his own and of his son's armies, to carry the place by storm before the sympathy of Ḳaseem, already enlisted in the cause of the capital, should bring about a general levy to its defence. But Zāmil had already sent word of these events to 'Abd-el-Moṭṭalib the Shereef of Mecca, and laid before him the danger impending over the sacred city itself from Wahhabee encroachments, should 'Oneyzah, the sole existing barrier between it and Nejed, be thus swept away. The Shereef perceived the reality of the peril announced, and with what few troops he could muster came to the scene of action. There he met with Feyṣul and 'Abd-Allah, and proposed to act as mediator between them and Zāmil. Feyṣul saw that to continue the war after the intervention of the Shereef, and in his despite, might well draw down on himself and on his empire consequences no less fatal than what had once followed on the rupture between his grandfather and the Ottoman power, which the Shereef represented. Reluctantly he abandoned his prey, accepted the offered terms of pacification "on the hand" (an Arabian expression) of the

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governor of Mecca, and retired with his army to the mountains of Nejed, leaving Zāmil and his supporters to themselves; while 'Abd-el-Moṭṭalib, after exacting and obtaining from the Wahhabee the strongest assurance that no new attempt should be made upon the liberty of 'Oneyzah, returned to the Ḥejāz.

Six or seven years passed before the Wahhabee ventured on an open violation of the treaty ratified by so high an authority. But he never lost sight of his first design, and with true Nejdean perseverance carried steadily on all this while a series of measures calculated to render easier its after execution, so soon as time and opportunity should come round to his turn. One after another he attacked and crushed the tribes of 'Oṭeybah, Ḥarb, and whatever others were likely to furnish contingents to the army of 'Oneyzah. Meanwhile the power of Mohanna in the neighbouring town of Bereydah received further and further accessions, till it extended over almost the whole of Ḳaseem, while 'Oneyzah became in a manner isolated and cut off from its main sources of strength alike in commerce and in war. At last nothing remained between Feyṣul and his hopes but the risk of provoking the hostility of the Shereef of Mecca, and thereby of Egypt or Constantinople. Events which occurred without the Arabian limits in 1861, left him at liberty to raise the mask and commence direct hostilities. Certain news was brought that the change of politics occasioned at Constantinople by the death of the Sultan 'Abd-el-Mejeed, and the accession of his brother 'Abd-el-'Azeez, had been highly unfavourable to the Shereef 'Abd-el-Moṭṭalib, and that he would in all probability be soon displaced to make room for another known as a friend to the principles and progress of the Wahhabee. Besides the growing illness of Sa'eed Basha, and his unprofitable voyage to Europe, nullified all chance of Egyptian interference in behalf of 'Oneyzah. Feyṣul's moment was now come, yet he hesitated. Old and infirm, he may have felt himself unequal to the activity and cares inseparable from such an undertaking, while twinges of a conscience not wholly seared even by thirty years of reign are said to have deterred him awhile from the breach of his own most solemn engagements plighted to Zāmil and his townsmen. But the less scrupulous council of the Muddey'-

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yeeyah, or "Zelators" (of whom more hereafter), urged him to action, and at last he consented.

A quarrel was sought, and soon found on occasion of the annual tribute due from 'Oneyzah to the central government at Riaḍ. Feyṣul pretended that the money raised fell short of the sum stipulated on in the treaty, and sent an armed force to exact a larger supply. This too was furnished, but the Wahhabee was not so to be satisfied. He brought in a claim of arrears, said by him to have been fraudulently kept back, and inculpated Zāmil, whom he summoned to answer for himself at the capital of Nejed. To this summons Zāmil very naturally refused consent, and Feyṣul proclaimed war. The people of 'Oneyzah sent envoy on envoy to beg for peace, and offered to submit to any conditions imposed, except the surrender of their chief. But Feyṣul was inexorable, and the conflict went on.

At the period when I arrived at Ḥā'yel, the 'Oneyzah war had lasted for four or five months without any decisive result, or even any very considerable advantage on either side. Feyṣul sought to weaken the partisans of Zāmil by dragging on the campaign till its duration should have thoroughly harassed and wearied out his enemies, intending then to gather all his force and strike the final blow when morally sure of speedy and complete success. This plan seemed excellently calculated to obviate the dangers consequent on any reverse at the first outset, and to ensure final triumph. And so, in fact, it proved.

To this end he sent his younger son Moḥammed with small bands of Nejdean troops renewed from time to time, and enjoined him to second the operations of Mohanna, who from his central position at Bereydah was carrying on a sort of loose blockade against 'Oneyzah, much resembling the siege of Troy in character, and destined in all appearance to scarce a less duration. Zāmil and his men retaliated by frequent sallies against the aggressors, and by inroads on the lands and gardens belonging to Bereydah or other towns subject to Mohanna, and the result of these partial operations had hitherto been on the whole in their favour.

The whole of Ḳaseem with the exception of a very small party sympathized with the warriors of 'Oneyzah and desired their success; but the fear of Mohanna and the constant arrival of

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fresh Nejdeans, those Romans of Arabia, kept most of the natives of the land from open action. Zāmil and El-Khey'yāṭ sent repeated messages to the governor of Mecca and to Ṭelāl at Ḥā'yel, earnestly requesting their assistance or at least their mediation. But neither of the parties thus appealed to could afford any useful succour. Ṭelāl for his part was unwilling to provoke a downright war between himself and the Wahhabee, whose armies surpassed his own in the proportion of three to one, and whatever proposals of truce or treaty he could make were rejected or evaded at Riaḍ. Equally fruitless were the pacific endeavours of Abd-el-Moṭṭalib, now feeble, because unsupported. Egypt, the last hope of Zāmil, proved, not for the first time in history, a broken reed. Nor could any clear-sighted eye fail to perceive that, whatever temporary success might yet attend the extraordinary efforts of the 'Āṭee'yah and their retainers, it must ultimately become impossible for one isolated town, though well defended and garrisoned, to resist alone the whole weight of Nejed, and the multiplied resources of the Wahhabee. However the partisans of 'Oneyzah still continued to hope against hope, and the wish being in this as in too many other instances parent to the thought, flattered themselves with the promise of a result no less unlikely in the natural course of events than the emancipation of Poland, or the triumph of Sertorius over the legions of Pompey.

Such was the position of affairs in August 1862; the rest of my stay in Arabia exactly coincided with the continuation and catastrophe of this bloody drama, of which I was in part rendered by circumstances a very unwilling eyewitness. And accordingly I do not think this cursory sketch of the origin and progress of these events superfluous or uninteresting, though at the expense of a somewhat long digression.

We left Doheym and his friends or relatives in earnest discussion of these same topics. However, their conversational powers were nowise confined to war and politics; medicine and surgery (for the Arabs hardly distinguish the one from the other, whether in theory or practice; indeed, their favourite remedy or panacea, the actual cautery, belongs rather to the latter than the former) were often brought on the carpet, and I was pleased to find my Ḳaseem acquaintances speak on these

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matters with much good sense, all due allowances made, and even with some slight tinge of experience. Many plants that grow hereabouts possess some medicinal virtue, tonic, sedative, or narcotic, and are occasionally employed by the more knowing inhabitants. The use, too, of fomentations and other external remedies or palliatives is not entirely beyond their skill, and natural quickness may and does fill up to a certain measure the deficiencies of theoretical ignorance.

Some authors, travelled or otherwise, have represented the Arabs of the interior as a race absolutely incapable of any real attainment or progress in practical and material science, and have supposed that branch of knowledge to be the exclusive portion of Japhet, to borrow for an instant the typical but convenient classification used by many, while Shem and his descendants, amongst whom the Arabs hold a distinguished place, are to be allowed neither part nor lot in this matter. My own experience, if indeed it may bear the name of experience, would lead me to a very different conclusion; and I am rather inclined to regard the Arabs, taken in themselves and individually, as endowed with a remarkable aptitude for these very pursuits, and hardly less adapted "to the railroad, to the steamship," or any other nineteenth-century invention or natural research than the natives of Sheffield or Birmingham themselves. But lack of communication with other countries, and especially with those which were in former times, and yet are, the fountain-heads of that special activity; and, in addition, the Mahometan drug which paralyzes whatever it does not kill outright, have kept them back in the intellectual race, to be outrun by others more favoured by circumstance, though not perhaps by nature. When the Coran and Mecca shall have disappeared from Arabia, then, and then only, can we seriously expect to see the Arab assume that place in the ranks of civilization from which Mahomet and his book have, more than any other individual cause, long held him back.

I do not exactly know how far these remarks may have their analogical application among Turks or Persians. The former, whether in their Pagan or in their Mahometan phase, have hardly ever appeared on the world's scene except to destroy, rarely to construct; neither literature nor arts owing aught

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to the Turk but progressive debasement and decay. As to the Persians, they appear to me, at least in their national character, essentially and irretrievably rotten, whatever be their religion, dynasty, or organization. Their influence on the Eastern mind has been undeniably great; but only productive of extravagance in speculation, bad taste in literature, and perversity in art. Again and again they have fermented the masses around them, but with a fermentation which a Liebig himself could hardly distinguish from putrefaction. Very different is the aspect afforded by the better days of Arab preponderance; and the decline and extinction of its early promise can only be explained, partly by the foreign influences, national or intellectual, of Ispahan and Tartary, and still more by the Mahometan principle of decay, first developed in the Ḥejāz.

Here at Ḥā'yel, and in other parts of central Arabia where Wahhabeeism is in the minority or, happily, unknown, one is much less wearied with the eternal "There is no God but God," the "If it please God," "There is no strength nor power save in God," and the whole catalogue of phrases with which the Mahometan encourages his growing apathy or bars the onward road to enquiry and exertion. On the other hand, "There is no denying the efficiency of secondary causes," "Every thing has its own cause," are current expressions here, and are often made use of in reply to the fatalistic interjections of some fervent Musselman. This is more especially the case among those who, like the party now assembled in Doheym's house, are in an actual state of irritation against the Wahhabee and his ways. "Belaa'na Allah," literally "God has devoured us up," have I repeatedly heard from these men, when alluding to the "Allah, Allah," in season and out of season of the Wahhabee fanatic or politician. And since Mahometanism in general is only known to them through the Nejdean medium, the reaction against the doctrines of Moḥammed, the son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb, is not far from involving the system of the yet more famous Moḥammed, son of 'Abd-Allah, of Mecca. For further illustration of this and of the preceding remarks, I must refer my reader to the onward progress of our journey.

In a narrative like this, where personal adventures and the process of days and months are intermingled with general

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reflections and national or religious speculation, many statements must needs occur here and there which may at first sight appear overcharged, or at least not enough propped up by immediate argument and proof. Should my reader find it so, I would beg him to suspend awhile his critical judgment, and to wait till facts and scenes unavoidably reserved by the date of their occurrence to a later period of my story may have filled up the outlines thus broadly traced beforehand. My book is—at least I mean it to be—a whole, and cannot be taken otherwise, under penalty of misunderstanding: nor do I believe that I have advanced anything in one page which is not fairly borne out by the contents of another, though perhaps after an interval of a few chapters. Where, however, I touch on lands or races external to the Arabian Peninsula, brevity compels me to dispense in some measure with minute corroboration, or complete explanation and research. Were I now and here to enter full sail on so vast a sea, the result would be an encyclopædia rather than a journey, and of this the limits of a volume destined simply to the recital of travels in Central and Eastern Arabia will hardly permit. And with this apology given, and I hope admitted, let us return to our patchwork tale.

An hour wears away in agreeable and lively talk. Some other patients are offered to my care, and visits are arranged, till, after suitable prescriptions for the invalid, I rise to take my leave. Doheym's eldest brother offers to accompany me to some of the neighbouring houses, where he expects that mutual advantage may be derived for the sick and for the doctor.

This part of the town is composed of large groups or islands of houses, arranged with some approach to regularity amid gardens and wells: but it possesses neither market nor mosque, an additional evidence of the prevailing want of organization before the Ebn-Rasheed dynasty. The streets or lanes are cleaner than I had expected to find them, much more so, certainly, than those of any Turkish or Curdish village; but this is due in part to the remarkable dryness of the climate. We stroll about here and there, sometimes drawing near to the high craggy rock that overhangs the eastern town wall, sometimes winding through the groves that border the inner line of the southern fortifications, till noon is past, and the heat

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renders further walking unadvisable. So'eyd reconducts me to the main road, and there quits me with a promise to send Doheym in the evening to inform me of the state of my patient.

I now return homewards alone; the streets and the market are nearly solitary; the small black shadows lie close gathered up at the stems of the palm-trees or under the walls, everything sleeps under the heavy glare of noon. Perhaps, instead of going on directly to our domicile, curiosity and the pleasure of being alone leads me on some minutes farther up to the western gate, thence to look out on the great plain between Ḥā'yel and the mountain. That plain now appears transformed into one wide lake, whose waters seem to bathe the rocky verge of Shomer, while nearer to the town they fade into deceptive pools and shallows; it is the every-day illusion of the mirage. If we return when the meridian heat is passing away, we may see the fairy lake shrunk up to a distant pond, and before evening it will quite disappear, to return next day an hour or two before noon. Meanwhile this semblance of water, "the eye of the landscape," as the Arabs not inappropriately call that element, renders the view, which would else be too arid and rough, very lovely. Were it but real!

After feasting my gaze on this beautiful though now familiar phenomenon, I regain our dwelling. Barakāt and myself make our dinner, and talk over the visits and affairs of the morning. We have then two hours or so of quiet before us, for it is seldom that any one calls at this period of the day, hardly less a siesta here than in Italy or Spain. At last the 'Asr approaches, a division of time well known in the East, but for which European languages have no corresponding name; it begins from the moment when the sun has reached half-way in his declining course, and continues till about an hour and a half or rather less before his setting. We now leave the house together, and direct our steps towards the palace by a cross-way leading between the dwellings of some court retainers and an angle of the great mosque. In this latter there will generally be a decent number of worshippers for the Salāt-el-'Asr, or afternoon prayers, especially since this is the hour chosen by Ṭelāl and Zāmil out of the five legal periods for performing their devotions in public, though even then they are not un-

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frequently absent. These prayers are invariably followed by the reading aloud of a chapter or section selected from some traditionary work, and to this often succeeds a short extemporary sermon or commentary on what has been read. We were known to all for Christians, but nobody made any difficulty about admitting our presence on these occasions, and we often took advantage of this tolerance or indifference, be it which it may,—and indeed the words are at times synonymous.

Concerning the ceremonies of the prayer itself—though slightly different among the Ḥambelees and Mālekees of Central Arabia, from those in fashion with the Wahhabees, on the one hand, and from what is generally observed among the Shāfi'ees and Ḥaneefees more frequently met with in Syria or in Turkey, on the other —I will not here detain my reader, nor puzzle him with the complicated minutiæ of sunneh and farḍ, rek'aas, and tekbeers. These scarcely perceptible discrepancies have no real moment or meaning at Ḥā'yel; and for a correct idea of Mahometan worship in its ordinary form, I would beg leave to refer such as desire it to the third chapter of Lane's Egypt, where they will find whatever instruction they may need on this and on analogous subjects given in clear and interesting detail, and with incomparable accuracy upon all points.

When indeed we reach the Upper Nejed, it must be my task to indicate several variations in the form and manner of worship, which help to draw the line between the Wahhabees and all other orthodox or heterodox Muslims. For in that land religion has a real import, being interwoven into every fibre of the national, nay, almost of the individual frame, and hence such details have there a peculiar value, not, perhaps, exactly on their own account, but in the way of illustration and of completing the principal view. On the contrary, in Ḥā'yel and Djebel Shomer, the Mahometan prayers and usages are rather polite ceremonies adopted out of courtesy to their neighbours than an intimate expression of national belief and thought. Hence their practice is almost exclusively confined to the great official mosque of the capital, and a few similar localities. It is more an expedient than a faith, and an act of prudence rather than of conviction, and because such offers little worthy of remark except its hollowness. The real state of mind

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touching religious matters is throughout this region uncertainty and fluctuation; there is much of Paganism, something of Islamism, a lingering shade of Christianity, and great impatience of any definite code or dogma.

When the formulas of prayer are over, about half the congregation rise and depart. Those who remain in the mosque draw together near the centre of the large and simple edifice, and seat themselves on its pebble-strewn floor, circle within circle; some lean their backs against the rough square pillars, I might better call them piers, that support the roof, some play with the staff or riding-switch in their hands. In the midmost of the assembly a person selected as reader, but neither Imām nor Khaṭeeb, who is supposed to be better acquainted with letters than are the average of his countrymen, besides being gifted with a good and sonorous voice, holds on his knees a large manuscript, which might be an object of much curiosity at Berlin or Paris; it contains the traditions of the prophet, or the lives of his companions, or perhaps El-Bokhāree's commentaries, or something else of the kind. Out of this he reads in a clear but somewhat monotonous tone, accompanying each word by an inflexion and accentuation worthy of Sibawee'yah or Kosey', and hardly to be attained by the best professional grammarian of Syria or Cairo. And reason clear; here it is nature, there art. This kind of lecture lasts ordinarily from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour, and is listened to in decorous silence, while all who have any pretensions to religious feeling, and these form of course a large proportion of those present on such occasions, look down on the ground, or fix their eyes on the reader and his volume. Others, of a less serious turn of mind, and the younger auditors, put themselves at their ease; and others, again, whisper sceptical criticism to their neighbours, or interchange glances of sarcasm at the recital of some portentous exploit, or totally incredible vision. For although Arabs are a credulous race, much that is readily gulped down at Mecca and Bagdad, will not pass here. I regret to say that Ṭelāl himself, when he honoured these meetings with his presence, set invariably a very bad example of attention, giving the time to studying the faces of the congregation, and showing by

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the expression of his quick-glancing eye, that his thoughts were much more occupied by questions of actual life and politics, than by the wise sayings of the Prophet, or the glorious achievements of his companions. The man is in fact just enough of a Mahometan for state business, and not a tittle more.

If the prince were in the mosque his custom was after about ten minutes' patience to give the reader a sign that he had had enough of it, on which the latter would close his book, and the assembly break up without further ceremony. But if the prince were absent, the reader's place would be taken by one of the elder and more respectable individuals belonging to the semi-literary semi-religious class, or by the Imām or the Khaṭeeb himself, who would then give a short verbal explanation of the chapter just read, or at times an extemporary sermon, but sitting, and in a familiar way. I have often heard much good sense and practical morality enounced on these occasions both here and in Ḳaseem. In the Wahhabee provinces matters often took a different turn; but of this hereafter.

When the reading, or the reading and sermon together, are concluded, every one would remain seated in silence for a minute or so, partly as though to reflect on what they had heard, and partly to give the more important personages present free time to retire before the press of the throng. Ṭelāl would naturally be the first to rise and leave the building, accompanied by Zāmil and his brothers or 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and take his place on a stone bench in the courtyard without, there to hold a short afternoon audience. On this occasion minor causes, and whatever had not been deemed of sufficient importance to occupy the morning hours, would often be discussed; and Ṭelāl himself would occasionally relax into a condescending smile when some Bedouin presented his uncouth complaint, or two townsmen, guilty of having called each other hard names, were brought into his presence. I was more than once an amused spectator of these scenes; Ṭelāl's manner was concise and sarcastic; the decision very frequently to administer a few stripes, nowise severe ones, to both parties; the royal judge wisely observing that insult was almost always the offspring of provocation, and that where the fault was equally divided, the punishment should be so too. But it was a very mild

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one; a Charterhouse boy in my time (1838–44) might have thought himself lucky had three marks in the Black Book brought him no more from the dreaded head-master of that day.

We now mix with the crowd; sometimes 'Abd-el-Maḥsin would single us out, and enter into deep discussion of Arab literature and history; or a friend from among the townsmen, often one of the younger chiefs who had become in a certain way our clients and companions, would invite us to peaches and dates, with a cup of that coffee which Arabia alone can afford, in his father's or uncle's house. Or we would return straight home to meet the many visits and consultations already awaiting us there, and while I prescribe or operate, according to circumstances, Barakāt prepares our supper of rice and pumpkins, with occasionally a piece of meat by way of luxury. For we made little use of our standing invitation to the palace, and did not often accept a supper in a private house, wishing to keep a little time to ourselves, and to avoid over-publicity, where not necessary or evidently advantageous.

I may add that this degree of reservedness on our part helped to raise us much in the esteem of the town, and to avert from us the dangerous appearance of busybodies, or of inquisitive and meddlesome men. I say dangerous, because we were already close watched by Wahhabee spies, ready to lay us any snare and proceed to any extremity, as the next chapter will bring to light. Dangerous, too, though in another way, from its consequences with Ṭelāl himself, who, far too prudent to compromise himself, or to allow others to compromise him, would not have hesitated an instant, if dissatisfied with us, to send us "back on our heels," in Arab phrase, and thus prostrate all our intentions for the remainder of our journey. But an open and familiar manner wherever business was concerned, mixed with reserve on other occasions, won us a good place in popular feeling, did away with the suspicions of some, and prevented those of the rest from passing on to probability, much less certainty.

However, when any more distinguished individual, some member of the royal family, or wealthy and respectable citizen, invited us—for example, the judge Moḥammed or the courtly

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'Abd-el-Maḥsin, or the opulent Ḍoḥey', an elderly merchant in whose house my medical assistance had been of service, we would relax from our ordinary austerity, and accept the honourable invitation. Of these dinners or suppers, for either name may suit the evening meal, I have already spoken at sufficient length, and need not here go through the scene again. *Ex uno disce omnes*, at least in what regards the comestibles through the whole of inner Arabia from the Djowf to the neighbourhood of Riaḍ. Never had a nation less idea of cookery than the Arabs; in this science, anyhow, Turks, Persians, and Indians leave them immeasurably behind; they know no more of it in truth than just enough to bring them within the "cooking animal" definition of man. Rice and boiled mutton, all piled in one large dish, a little indifferent bread, dates, perhaps a hard-boiled egg or two, hashed gourds or something of the kind for garnish; the monarch of all Shomer cum Djowf and Kheybar has no more at his table. Wash your hands, say Bismillah (unless you desire to pass for an atheist), fall to, eat as fast as though you were afraid that the supper would run away, then say, "El ḥamdu l'Illāh," or "thanks to God," with an added compliment to your host if you wish to be polite, wash your hands again, with soap or with potash, for sometimes the one will be brought you and sometimes the other, and all is over as far as the meal is concerned. You have smoked a pipe or two and drunk three or four cups of coffee before supper; you may now smoke and drink one only, for that is the etiquette after eating, and then wish your friends good evening and go away.

Rosheyd, Ṭelāl's maternal uncle, and our next-door neighbour, as I have before mentioned, invited us not unfrequently to his house. He was a rather shrewd, amusing, but very superficial character, proud of his knowledge of foreign lands, having travelled farther than almost any other man in Ḥā'yel. He had even reached Kerkook, seven days' journey north of Bagdad, and was besides no stranger to Egypt, both Upper and Lower. Like too many travellers of more cultivated races, he had managed to see the outside of everything and the inside of nothing, and would spin long yarns of grotesque adventures and exotic singularities, much reminding one of the way in which

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men are apt to talk of other countries than their own when they have visited them without previous knowledge of language, history, and manners. He believed himself, too, possessed of unusual discernment, and imagined that he was drawing us out, while in reality he was only unveiling himself and his family. But his heart was better than his head, and if not a wise he was at least a kind and steady friend.

Ḍoḥey's invitations were particularly welcome, both from the pleasantness of his dwelling-place, and from the varied and interesting conversation that I was sure to meet with there. This merchant, a tall and stately man of between fifty and sixty years of age, and whose thin features were lighted up by a lustre of more than ordinary intelligence, was a thorough Ḥā'yelite of the old caste, hating Wahhabees from the bottom of his heart, and with small sympathy for Mahometanism in general, eager for information on cause and effect, on lands and governments, and holding commerce and social life for the main props if not the ends of civil and national organization. His uncle, now near eighty years old, to judge by conjecture in a land where registers are not much in use, had journeyed to India, and traded at Bombay; in token whereof he still wore an Indian skull-cap and a Cachemire shawl. The rest of the family were in keeping with the elder members, and seldom have I seen more dutiful children or a better educated household. My readers will naturally understand that by education I here imply its moral not its intellectual phase. The eldest son, himself a middle-aged man, would never venture into his father's presence without unbuckling his sword and leaving it in the vestibule, nor on any account presume to sit on a level with him or by his side in the divan.

The divan itself was one of the prettiest I met with in these parts. It was a large square room, looking out on the large house-garden, and cheerfully lighted up by trellised windows on two sides, while the wall of the third had purposely been discontinued at about half its height, and the open space thus left between it and the roof propped by pillars, between which "a fruitful vine by the sides of the house" was intertwined so as to fill up the interval with a gay network of green leaves and tendrils, transparent like stained glass in the eastern sunbeams.

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Facing this cheerful light the floor of the apartment was raised about two feet above the rest, and covered with gay Persian carpets, silk cushions, and the best of Arab furniture. In the lower half of the Ḳ'hāwah, and at its farthest angle, was the small stone coffee-stove, placed at a distance where its heat might not annoy the master and his guests. Many of the city nobility would here resort, and the talk generally turned on serious subjects, and above all on the parties and politics of Arabia; while Ḍoḥey' would show himself a thorough Arab patriot, and at the same time a courteous and indulgent judge of foreigners, qualities seldom to be met with together in any notable degree, and therefore more welcome.

Many a pleasant hour have I passed in this half greenhouse, half Ḳ'hāwah, mid cheerful faces and varied talk, while inly commenting on the natural resources of this manly and vigorous people, and straining the eye of forethought to discern through the misty curtain of the future by what outlet their now unfruitful because solitary good may be brought into fertilizing contact with that of other more advanced nations, to the mutual benefit of each and all. "It is not good that the man should be alone" was said from the beginning by a very high Authority, no, nor the nation either. Time, not perhaps distant, may help to solve the problem.

Or else some garden was the scene of our afternoon leisure, among fruit-trees and palms, by the side of a watercourse, whose constant supply from the well hid from view among thick foliage, seemed the work not of laborious art but of unassisted nature. Here, stretched in the cool and welcome shade, would we for hours canvass with 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and others of similar pursuits, the respective merits of Arab poets and authors, of Omar-ebn-el-Fāriḍ or Aboo'l 'Ola, in meetings that had something of the Attic, yet with just enough of the Arab to render them more acceptable by their Semitic character of grave cheerfulness and mirthful composure.

Or when the stars came out, Barakāt and myself would stroll out of the heated air of the streets and market to the cool open plain, and there pass an hour or two alone, or in conversation with what chance passer-by might steal on us half unperceived and unperceiving in the dusk, and amuse ourselves with his

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simplicity if he were a Bedouin, or with his shrewdness if a townsman.

Thus passed our ordinary life at Ḥā'yel. Many minor incidents occurred to diversify it, many of the little ups and downs that human intercourse never fails to furnish; sometimes the number of patients and the urgency of their attendance allowed of little leisure for ought except our professional duties; sometimes a day or two would pass with hardly any serious occupation. But of such incidents, though invested at the period of their occurrence with actual and local interest, and even at this distance of time and place to me at least the source of much pleasant remembrance, I will say nothing more here; my readers have a sufficient sample in what has been already set down. From the 27th of July to the 8th of September we remained doctoring in the capital or in its immediate neighbourhood. But during this time was also carried on what might almost have seemed an episode, but which was in reality the main plot of the drama, and it became more and more inwoven with our other circumstances and occupations, till the exoteric veil of medicine could barely suffice to cover much of more genuine interest and importance. My readers may easily guess that I alluded to our position relatively to Ṭelāl, to his family and government, for with these and with him we were now unavoidably in frequent and significant contact. Here began a long series of events to be continued on through the rest of our journey, sometimes in accordance with our desires and sometimes against them—a very particoloured skein, reaching from Ḥā'yel to the Persian Gulf, and even farther. But this will be fittingly explained in a separate chapter.

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CHAPTER V

Court Incidents at Ḥā'yel

Yet though thou stand'st more sure—
Thou art not sure enough, since griefs are green,
And all thy friends, which thou must make thy friends,
Have but their stings and teeth newly ta'en out.—
Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels.—*Shakespeare*

ṬELĀL'S CONDUCT TOWARDS US — HIS BROTHER META'AB — PALACE OF META'AB, HIS Ḳ'HĀWAH AND CONVERSATION—'ABBAS BASHA AND HIS INTRIGUES WITH THE BEDOUINS AND WAHHABEES: WHY BOTH FRUITLESS—LASCARIS AND FATḤ 'ALLAH—WHERE LIES ARAB NATIONALITY—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ḤĀ'YEL AND EGYPT — ṬELĀL'S POLICY TO OBTAIN THE PATRONAGE OF THE PERSIAN CARAVAN—DEPUTATIONS FROM ḲASEEM — OUR OWN POSITION GROWS CRITICAL — ZĀMIL, HIS CHARACTER—OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM—HIS CONDUCT—SECOND INTERVIEW WITH ṬELĀL — ITS RESULT — NEJDEAN SPIES — 'OBEYD — HIS HISTORY AND CHARACTER—WAHHABEE PARTY IN SHOMER — 'OBEYD'S CONDUCT TOWARDS US — WARNINGS OF 'ABD-EL-MAḤSIN — 'OBEYD'S OUTBREAK—HE TAKES COMMAND OF AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE ḤARB TRIBE—GATHERING OF THE TROOPS—'OBEYD'S LETTER ON OUR ACCOUNT TO 'ABD-ALLAH AT RIAḌ — THIRD INTERVIEW WITH ṬELĀL; ITS CONSEQUENCES—A SHOMER PASSPORT—REASONS FOR LEAVING ḤĀ'YEL—OUR GUIDES FOR ḲASEEM—FAREWELL VISITS OF 'ABD-EL-MAḤSIN, ZĀMIL, AND OTHERS—MUTUAL REGRETS—WE QUIT ḤĀ'YEL.

We have seen that Ṭelāl, although somewhat, so to speak, put off the scent by our conduct at our first entrance in his capital, and in some measure acquiescing in our medical disguise, had yet by no means laid aside his general idea that something more was meant by our visit to his dominions than met the eye or ear of ordinary observation. Accordingly he continued for a time to watch us closely by means of 'Abd-el-Maḥsin and others of the palace, and the frequent visits with which we were honoured from that quarter were no less prompted by the curiosity of the king to know all about us than by an excess of courtesy or thirst after science on the part of our friends themselves. Of this we could not but be aware, and kept constant to our first plan, nor allowed word or

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jest to escape us otherwise than in strict conformity with what we had announced at the very outset.

Before many days had passed a second invitation of Ṭelāl's reached us, purporting that we should do well to exchange our present abode for more spacious and convenient lodgings close by the royal palace. Its master hoped to have us thus immediately under his eye and hand. But a polite refusal on our side, tempered with suitable excuses on plausible grounds, baffled his desire. He felt the check, and henceforth returned our salutations at the public audience or in chance meetings with something less of cordiality than before.

Meanwhile his gay dashing brother Meta'ab, the second of the family, returned from the pasture-lands, where he had been looking after the well-doing of the royal stud in the meadows of Ḥafr Ma'ad, at some distance from Ḥā'yel. His long jetty ringlets, his gorgeous dress and easy demeanour contrasted with the more sober-coloured apparel and serious ways of his elder brother and sovereign. He was a travelled man, had often visited Meshid 'Alee and its confines, and had even more than once entered Bagdad, and discoursed with Bashas and Consuls. But, while the levity both of his outer and inner man rendered him unsuited for the weightier business of the State, his agreeable manners and quickness of perception made him remarkably successful in those petty intrigues, which in the East and the West alike may often prepare the way for affairs of greater moment; and in such preliminary manœuvres Meta'ab was a known and willing instrument.

A man of this character could not fail to be soon informed of our arrival and of all concerning us; and he had no need of further instigation to desire our better acquaintance. The very second day after his return from the country, that is, about the tenth since our establishment in Ḥā'yel, he honoured us with a morning visit; wished to see the medicines, the books, everything; talked in a random way about Egypt and Syria, and took a hasty leave. But the same evening a handsome negro of his retinue came up to me while I was walking in the neighbourhood of the palace, and informed me that the Emeer Meta'ab requested me to take coffee with him at his dwelling.

His palace, about the size of three large Belgrave Square houses,

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is close by that of Ṭelāl, and joins on to it by a long covered gallery, with windows at regular intervals, and resembling a cloister were it vaulted instead of flat-roofed. Into this passage I now entered, escorted by the black, till after traversing its whole length we reached a vestibule, where a confusion of swords and shoes left outside announced the presence of several visitors within. There in a lofty Ḳ'hāwah sat Meta'ab, and before him a Persian pipe or Nargheelah, from which he was busily inhaling exotic vapours. Several of the courtsmen and townsmen were seated near, and a thick cloud, but not of incense, went up on every side.

A cordial welcome greeted my entrance, and Meta'ab rose to present me his open hand in half-Arab, half-English fashion. While coffee and the ceremonies which accompany it went round, our host began a very free and easy chat about Bagdad, its Basha, the English and French consuls, their horses and their politics, what he had seen and what heard, to discover whether all this would take with me. But having at that time not yet visited Bagdad, it was easy for me to look blank, and to show little interest in these matters; Meta'ab then changed his key-note, and tried Egypt.

Here the case was changed. I was really very desirous to know what intercourse might exist between Djebel Shomer and the valley of the Nile, and accordingly let him understand that I was no stranger to Cairo and its neighbourhood. The Emeer, delighted to find a better opening in this quarter, launched out into much and curious, though desultory, discourse about Sa'eed Basha and his journey to Europe, about 'Abbas Basha and his intrigues with the Arab chiefs, and explained the actual position of his brother towards the reigning viceroy.

In this and in the following interviews with Meta'ab, who became more intimate day by day, I obtained a tolerably distinct idea of what I had heard about before, but only confusedly—I mean the strange Arab intrigues of 'Abbas Basha. That prince had devised a scheme for not only rendering himself independent of the Ottoman Porte, but even of becoming in person sole sovereign of the Arabian Peninsula, by means of a double alliance, linked with the Bedouins to the north, and the Wahhabees to the south. In the view of ensuring the

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sympathy of the former, he consigned his eldest son, then a mere child, to the well-known Feyṣul-ebn-Shaa'lān, chief of the great Ru'ala tribe, intending thus to have his heir brought up like one of the clan, and in all the perfection of wild ways and customs. Besides this singular measure, he sent abundant largesses to the other contiguous tribes; while any Bedouin who approached his palace was sure of a favourable reception, and was readily admitted to experience the effects of his lavish liberality, if one may term liberality what was in fact mere waste. Nay, the infatuated viceroy went to the extent of affecting the Bedouin in his own person and manners, would imitate the nomade style of dress, relish, or seem to relish, their fare, and live with them on a footing of sham familiarity, fancying the while that he was gaining their affection to his service.

It may be said in the way of apology for the extravagancies of 'Abbas Basha, that others of more pretensions than ever were his to intellectual discernment, have now and then committed a somewhat similar miscalculation regarding the supposed importance of the Bedouin tribes, and the advantages to be derived from their alliance. But what rendered the Egyptian governor particularly inexcusable in his error, was the contrary example of his own uncle Ibraheem Basha, and the success which had attended him in an exactly opposite course of policy. The neglect of family lessons and hereditary experience is of all others the hardest to pardon in a ruler.

"The man who relies on Bedouin assistance is like one who should build his house on the face of the water," said Meta'ab to me, while describing the conduct of 'Abbas, and he said true. This assertion he proved by reasons not unworthy of record, since assigned by one whom long experience had rendered every way capable of forming a correct estimate of the subject. "The Bedouins," thus continued the Emeer, the sense of whose words I give, though not the words themselves, "besides their little weight in serious warfare, owing to their deficiency in arms, accoutrements, and military discipline, besides their utter incapacity of combined action, because split up into infinitesimal factions by continual and childish feuds that never permit them to unite for any real purpose a month together, are besides

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the mere creatures of the moment, to whom the present hour alone is something, yesterday and to-morrow alike nothing. Without either national or religious aim or principle, without social bonds or patriotic feeling, every one isolated in his own petty and personal interests, all against all, and all equally without purpose or meaning, they neither care for those out of their clan, nor even for their own tribesmen, except just so far as they may chance to receive from them some immediate gain, or suffer some actual detriment—friends to-day, enemies to-morrow, friends again the day after. Now if such is their condition with those of their own 'skin' (race), much more so must it be with respect to strangers. Sultan, Viceroy, Turk, Egyptian, English, French, all is one with them—they have no sympathy with any one of all these, and are no more disposed to attach themselves to the one rather than to the other. Their only real partiality is for the highest bidder; and while, to use their own expression, 'his food is yet in their bellies,' they may possibly do his work, but even that so far only as it is evidently profitable to themselves, and not over-dangerous either. In such a case one may reckon that they will furnish camels and bring water, or even take courage to attack and plunder a neighbouring village or a weaker tribe; but these services are simply in the view of hire or booty, not in the least from any liking to or esteem for their employer, much less from aught approaching to patriotism and national feeling. And in proof of this they will be perfectly ready to turn on and plunder their former ally and friend, the very first hour that they see him unable to afford them advantage or to offer resistance."

Thus far Meta'ab. But I have often been amused by thinking how ill bestowed were the labours of Lascaris and his companion Fatḥ-Allah during the seven years they passed lavishing the money of their imperial master in getting up a Bedouin alliance on national and philanthropic principles. And I trust that I may be pardoned for smiling at what I have more than once heard the very objects of their misplaced largesses, the Ru'ala, Sebaa', and Ḥasinah Bedouins, ridicule themselves, and that heartily. Not only within the limits of the Syrian desert, but even farther inland up to Ḥā'yel, I met with some

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remembrance of this wild scheme, and Meta'ab had learnt from the Ru'ala, in their occasional visits to Djebel Shomer, all the main facts and features of its progress. Not that the wonderful events of wars and combats with which Lamartine in his version of Fatḥ-Allah's journal has swollen the bulk of his second volume about Syria, have any historical reality, at least to the best of what I could discover, nor did any one pretend to the faintest remembrance of seven days' battles on the banks of the Orontes, or expeditions conducted into the heart of Persia and Beloochistan. The same must be said of the pretended embassy to the Wahhabee monarch at Derey'eeyah, and whatever other episodes the author's vivid imagination has tacked on to his story. But of presents offered and received, of largesses made and tribes enriched with European gold, there was remembrance enough. To conclude, the whole business was a capital "catch" for the Bedouins, and so was 'Abbas Basha and his intrigues.

His bounty—for to him we now return—was of course gladly pocketed or eaten, promises were signed and sealed, and a faith which had never existed was solemnly pledged. Then all disappeared like a ripple on the water. No sooner had the news of the Basha's death reached Syria, than Feyṣul-ebn-Shaa'lān got rid of his benefactor's son by a dose of poison, if report say true, and thus ended the Egypto-Bedouin alliance, with no more utility for those who made it than that of Lascaris before. In one thing only 'Abbas Basha succeeded, namely, in convincing all Arabia that he was a fool; a compendious result, and likely to be attained by any one who may choose to tread in the steps of the Egyptian viceroy.

Nor was 'Abbas Basha more lucky in his Wahhabee alliance, though here his mistake was much worthier of excuse; indeed, it would have required a very thorough acquaintance with the political condition of inner Arabia not to have anticipated a more advantageous termination to this measure. The Wahhabees certainly presented an organized government and a central power, acting on and guided by well-defined principles of religion and nationality, all so many points whereon to fix the Egyptian lever; and besides, it would be a great injustice to the sturdy and dogged denizens of Nejed to compare them with the

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fickle and undependable Bodouins either in moral or in military value. Yet here again 'Abbas had mistaken his men. The Wahhabees were too consistent in their peculiar dogmas not to regard the Egyptian as a polytheist and an infidel, one of those whose friendship was enmity with God, and his professions of orthodoxy met with as little credence among the Nejdeans as the Islamism of Kleber or of Bonaparte (I mention not to stigmatise but to illustrate) found among the Egyptians themselves. No one believed him, no one trusted; and the true believers of Riad showed a steadfastness in holding back from the flattering offers of Egypt, greater than that which Jeremiah vainly sought to obtain in his day from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on somewhat analogous grounds. In addition, the Wahhabees were yet smarting from the blows inflicted on them by Mohammed 'Alee and Ibraheem Basha, and ill-disposed to unite with the grandson of the one and the nephew of the other. However, the desire of expected profit led them not wholly to reject the tendered alliance, nor rudely interrupt the stream of envoys, every one of whom filled their hands with the good things of Egypt; and they continued to hold out hopes of compliance and co-operation, like angling lines to catch the silly fish of the Nile, till the presents of 'Abbas Basha had well replenished the coffers of Feysul-ebn-Sa'ood, while the Nejdean monarch's daughters, (as I myself witnessed, when his guest some months later at Riad), glistened in pearls and gold-net of Cairo workmanship. Thus the Wahhabee, like the Bedouins, though from different motives, pocketed the gifts and laughed at the giver.

In all this there was yet a deeper and more pernicious error. 'Abbas Basha did not, indeed he could not, know the immense reaction existing throughout the Arabian Peninsula against the overbearing tyranny of the Wahhabee dynasty, and greatly overrated the real strength and influence of the latter, while he neglected the proper source of Arab vigour, and missed the chord which, if skilfully touched, might have vibrated in his favour, from the shores of the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. A few words will explain this. Take the Wahhabees, that is, those who are really such, and the Bedouins together, they will not exceed one-fourth of the denizens of Arabia. The remaining three-fourths consist of townsmen and peasants spread through-

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out the land, enthusiastic partisans of their local chiefs and rulers, and true lovers of Arab freedom—patriots, in short, but alike hostile to Bedouin marauders and to Wahhabee coercion. They cling to a national glory and patriotic memories of a date much older than the recent honours of Ebn-Sa'ood, and rivalling or surpassing in antiquity those of Ḳoreysh itself. Love of order and commerce renders them also the enemies of nomadic anarchy. Lastly, they far outweigh their antagonists collectively in numbers no less than in national importance, and to them alone, if to any, are reserved the destinies of Arabia.

Mahomet, a master mind, saw this in his time, and it was exactly by enlisting this part of the Arab commonwealth and these feelings in his cause, that he secured his ascendency over the whole peninsula. The Coran and cotemporary tradition give no other clue to his able line of conduct, and to the prodigious success that justified it. Had he stopped here he would have been the first and greatest benefactor of his native country. But the prophet marred what the statesman had begun, and the deadening fatalism of his religious system, that narcotic of the human mind, stopped for ever the very progress to which he had himself half opened the way by his momentary fusion of Arabia into a common nation with a common aim. Again, the Judaical narrowness and ceremonial interferences of his law soon fretted the impatient and expansive mind of his countrymen into that almost universal revolt which accompanied rather than followed the news of his death. The revolt was indeed repressed for a moment, but soon reappeared, nor ceased till the final and lasting disintegration of the Arab empire in Arabia.

Now, if ordinary Islam proved too strait-laced for Arabia, Wahhabeeism is of necessity even more so, and the men who had broken assunder the yoke of Mahomet himself were very unlikely long to bow their necks under that of Ebn-Sa'ood and 'Abd-el-Wahhāb. Thus it was that 'Abbas Basha had chosen his starting-point ill, and his partiality for Riad and its rulers tended to estrange yet more from him the nation at large.

In Ḥā'yel 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed and his family kept wisely aloof from the manœuvres of the Egyptian viceroy, and awaited better times. These seemed at hand when the murder

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of 'Abbas placed Sa'eed Basha on the throne. The known inclination of this prince for European alliances was not an unfavourable circumstance in the views of Ṭelāl, who knew that from this latter quarter he might have much to gain where industry and commerce were concerned, while he could have but little to fear in the way of aggression and war. Surrounded on every side by a broad and almost trackless desert, with no ports or coast line to defend against the "dogs of the sea," as Europeans, and particularly the English, are often, though most impolitely, denominated in the East, and nestled amid a labyrinth of mountains and crags, the provinces of Ḥā'yel were the last place in the world to dread a French invasion or an English occupation, while on the other hand they might derive considerable profit from an interchange at arm's-length, so to speak, of material or mental goods. In this idea the negotiations between Ḥā'yel and Cairo, interrupted awhile by the ill-starred reign of 'Abbas Basha, were renewed after his death. But the frivolity of Sa'eed was not long in displaying itself, and Ṭelāl, while he continued to keep up a series of friendly messages and greetings to and fro, soon ceased to flatter himself with the hope of any effective support from that quarter against Wahhabite encroachments or Turkish hostility. Still, in the actual position of affairs, Egypt may be considered his best friend and ally in case of extreme need—a fact noticed on a former occasion.

I mentioned then, too, but in a general way, that Ṭelāl was careful to maintain his correspondence with Persia. It is now time to explain his special reasons for so doing, and what the Arab prince could look for from the decrepit despotism of Teheran. The solution of this problem lies in the geographical conditions of the land. I must here beg my readers to give a look to the map. There they will see that Djebel Shomer exactly crosses the line drawn from the central and upper provinces of Persia to the Ḥejāz, and thus is right in the track which Persian pilgrims would naturally follow in their annual visits to the Meccan Ca'abah, or the tombs of Medinah, whether those of Mahomet and his companions, or the more equivocal monuments of Shiya'ee devotion. Similar bodies of travellers benefit the towns and countries through which they pass by

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their wayfaring expenditure, no less than by the example of their piety, perhaps even more. To draw this yearly current of pilgrim wealth within the limits of his dominions, and to make it flow through the very gates of Ḥā'yel, was Ṭelāl's great desire; the more so because such a measure would not only ensure him the transient though oft-recurring advantages already alluded to, but would also serve to encourage the sectaries of Meshid 'Alee, Bagdad, and that whole region, in their trade with Djebel Shomer, a trade created by Ṭelāl, and highly beneficial to his entire kingdom, but especially to the capital. Many circumstances combined to favour this project. The road from Teheran and Bagdad by Djebel Shomer, traversing the narrower neck of the Arabian continent, and leading right to the sacred cities whither the pilgrims were bound, was indisputably more commodious and more secure, besides involving far less expense, than the circuitous routes followed so often by the Persian caravans through Syria, or southward down the Persian Gulf and along the coasts of 'Omān, Ḥaḍramaut and Yemen to Djiddah. There remained, indeed, the road across the centre of Arabia through Nejed, a comparatively short and easy track, but this was rendered almost impracticable for the votaries of 'Alee by the bigoted intolerance of the Wahhabees, who deemed their land polluted if trodden by such misbelieving wretches. How far "a consideration," in old Trapbois' phrase, might prevail in mitigating this abhorrence, we shall afterwards see. But with Ṭelāl, Sonnite and Shiya'ee were all one, and it was not his way to impose extra dues or exact any special perquisites from a pilgrim because his religious opinions chanced to be of this or of that colour.

Accordingly he employed all his diligence and skill to negotiate the annual transit of the Perso-Meccan caravan by Ḥā'yel in preference to the other routes just mentioned, and kept up a continual correspondence on the subject at Bagdad and Meshid 'Alee. There he found the Persian authorities well disposed to come into his ideas, and the Shah himself, when informed of the project, notified his entire approbation. Yet its full and entire execution has not yet taken place, owing to circumstances whose explanation can only be given when we reach Nejed itself. However, in spite of all opposition

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a numerous band of conical caps and furred robes appear every pilgrim-season in Ḥā'yel; I was myself witness of one caravan, and all the Persians in it expressed their gratitude in very bad Arabic for the gracious treatment they had met with from Ṭelāl and Meta'ab, and their entire satisfaction with the Shomer government.

Such and similar were the subjects of conversation in the Ḳ'hāwah of Meta'ab and his friends. I have recorded them at some length, hoping thereby to afford some kind of insight into thāt real and living Arabia so often left a blank in many narratives, no less than its geographical surface in many maps. To determine the positions of mountains, the course of rivers, the gradations of climate, the geological character of rocks, and whatever else relates to physical and inanimate nature, is certainly of high and serious importance, and here too I have tried to do my best, although with what imperfect results, from want of preparation and of opportunity for scientific observation, I am regretfully conscious. But to sum up much in that most hackneyed of all hackneyed quotations, "The proper study of mankind is man;" and it is perhaps an even higher service rendered to science and to Europe if we attempt to draw aside at least a little the veil so thickly cast over human-Arabia, its parties and politics, its mind and movement. I return to my story.

About twenty days had passed at Ḥā'yel, when we began seriously to consider whether and how far we should acquaint Ṭelāl with the real main object of our journey. We had by this time sufficiently ascertained his position, his views, his system, his projects. We had learnt his exact bearings with the Wahhabee and the Turk, how far he might be considered their ally, how far their enemy. We were no longer ignorant of the general feeling and tendency of his government and people, while the daily arrival of envoys from Ḳaseem and 'Oneyzah revealed more and more the intimate nature of politics and religion in Djebel Shomer. These very envoys had often sat hours together in our courtyard, and discussed with us and before us the means and ends of Ṭelāl, and the degrees of alliance which linked him with the chiefs of Ḳaseem in one way, and with their enemy the monarch of Nejed in another. Information thus obtained seemed to me in a certain measure

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more dependable than what I received from the born subjects and vassals of Ṭelāl.

Nor did we hold it fair to keep longer in the dark one who had so cordially welcomed us and treated us so well. Hitherto we had in fact requited his openness by reserve, and met his advances with something like chilliness. To put him in possession of a secret which he evidently desired to unravel, and which there seemed hardly any danger that he would abuse, might be reckoned no more than natural equity and justice towards our royal host.

Besides, though Ṭelāl seemed to think well of us on the whole, yet he could not but look on us with some suspicion, however slight; and such vague suspicion is apt to take a sinister turn. Now it was utterly impossible for us to pursue our journey into the Wahhabee territory except with Ṭelāl's cognizance, and by his good will. A passport bearing the royal signature is indispensable for whoever desires to journey on in that direction, much more to cross the frontier; without such a document in hand no one would venture to conduct us; and to attempt the road furtively and alone would have been to run a madman's risk. But that Ṭelāl would furnish us with the requisite passport while he yet felt uneasy about us and our intentions was highly improbable; whereas to tell him frankly the real object of our wanderings, and the course we meant to hold, was the likeliest way to procure from him a consent which doubt and mistrust otherwise might, nay, certainly would, deny.

Such was our position, and whatever step we might decide on was attended by its unavoidable difficulties; but after much discussion it was at last resolved in the cabinet council of myself and my companion that we should ask for a private interview with Ṭelāl, and then and there let him know all. However, to proceed in the most approved court-fashion, we determined first to secure an intermediary agent in our favour, and that we soon found in the person of the treasurer Zāmil.

This individual, so highly placed in the good graces of Ṭelāl, had all along approved himself equally intelligent and well-disposed. Medical duties and friendly invitations had already given me free access to himself and to his family; while he on his part, in spite of the great press of business which hardly left

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him a moment's leisure, had paid us frequent though cursory visits at our domicile. Participating fully in Ṭelāl's views, and having a considerable share in most of his administrative measures, he was decidedly of a brighter and more open character than his master, much easier of access, and giving in himself the rare example of a man raised from the lowest ranks of society to the highest degree of wealth and influence (at Ḥā'yel, I mean), without having thereby contracted anything of the arrogant and ungainly manners common to the *parvenu*. Lastly, he possessed a clear and capacious mind, Arab prudence, great moderation and tact, and much good nature. The only faults ascribed to him by that nice censor, popular rumour, and in a degree confirmed by the costly elegance of his dress and all about his handsome person, was a certain ostentation, and a love of pleasure carried even beyond the bounds of what one may call standard Arab morality; a fault, it may be added, from which his master Ṭelāl was not held exempt. But this weak point of Zāmil's character did not come in the way of the business we required him for; we trusted to his better qualities and influential position, nor had we after-reason to repent our trust.

Accordingly we took a suitable opportunity for informing him that we desired a secret interview with Ṭelāl on matters of considerable import, and begged him to procure it for us. Subsequently we went yet farther, and explained to our ambassador the entire case, and what it was that we desired to lay before the monarch.

Zāmil very properly took time to deliberate, and after demanding and receiving our consent, acquainted Ṭelāl with the reasons of our request. For two days he came regularly to our apartments, with the precaution, however, of selecting the hours which were least liable to observation, and conned over with us every point of the projected colloquy in the minutest detail. At last he informed us that on such and such a morning (it was the 21st of August) Ṭelāl would receive our communications.

I ought to say that in Arab no less than in European courts, personal and private audiences of the sovereign are looked upon as a high favour not to be lightly demanded nor

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easily conferred. Etiquette has something to do with this, policy more: something also is due to the fear of treachery, and more than one instance is recorded in the chronicles of the land of a supplicant admitted to privacy and there proving an assassin. Of public and official audiences, where "sun-like majesty" in its attendant pomp is alike secure from the felon's dagger, and from the cheapness of vulgar company, Ṭelāl is liberal enough, more so indeed by far than the monarchs of Nejed and 'Omān.

On the appointed day, a little before sunrise, my companion and myself sought out by circuitous side-lanes and by-ways Zāmil's house, and there seated ourselves in the empty Ḳ'hāwah, for the family were not yet stirring, and it was too early for guests. Zāmil himself had already gone to Ṭelāl, doubtless to concert with him how we were to be received. We had not waited long when a negro belonging to the palace entered the Ḳ'hāwah, and made us a signal to follow him. We entered the royal residence by a private door, generally kept shut, and after traversing several small apartments ascended a flight of stairs constructed in the central oval tower. At about mid-height the greater part of its width was occupied by a large and well-furnished room; and here sat Ṭelāl with Zāmil only by his side. Slaves and armed attendants were in waiting in an adjoining apartment, but too distant to overhear our conversation. After the first salutations in their wonted simplicity, the king said, "What do you wish to speak of?" and, seeing me hesitate a moment in my answer, added with a glance towards Zāmil, "Never mind his presence, you may consider him as myself."

Thus encouraged, I began, and gave a brief but clear account of the circumstances and object of our journey, whence and whither, what we desired, and what expected. A conversation of at least an hour ensued; it consisted principally of interrogations on Ṭelāl's part, and of explanations and answers on ours. His queries were always to the point; his remarks concise but uncommonly shrewd, and going to the bottom of things. Much that I said was met half-way by assent, on other points he suggested difficulties or proposed modifications. He took particular care not to commit himself by assurances of adhering to any definite line of conduct, and we of course

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avoided with equal scrupulosity all appearance of a desire to lead him farther or faster than he chose to follow. But he insisted much on the necessity of entire secrecy, saying, "Were what now passes between us to be known at large, it might be as much as your lives are worth, and perhaps mine also."

In the course of this interview I took the opportunity to mention certain ambiguous and sinister reports which I had been told circulated regarding us among some classes of the people. "Does the town say so?" exclaimed Ṭelāl in an half-scornful voice; and then placing his hand on his breast, added, with a gesture and a tone that Louis XIV in council might have envied, "I am the town!" subjoining, "Never fear; from none of my subjects shall you ever again hear the like. But," continued he, "there are others for whom I cannot answer equally well."

At last, when all had been sufficiently canvassed, Ṭelāl expressed his wish that we should continue to sift these matters with Zāmil, promised a second audience, in which he was to give us a more definite answer; "though," said he, "that cannot be in a hurry," and then called out to a slave who stood waiting behind the door, sword in hand. The negro thus summoned put his head into the room, and then vanished a moment, to return with ready-made coffee. After all had drunk, two other servants brought in a large round dish, laden with excellent peaches, of which Ṭelāl partook along with us, in sign of entire confidence and good will. When all was concluded, Zāmil, with a highly satisfied air (for he was by this time an enthusiastic participator in our views), rose, and conducted us downstairs and so from the palace to his own house. Several days passed, during which we met frequently; but Ṭelāl continued to defer his ultimatum, nor were we inclined to urge him out of season.

Meanwhile, the "others," at whom our royal friend had hinted, were not idle; indeed, we had been long before made aware of their existence. More than once a Nejdean, in the plain cotton dress of a Meṭow'waa' or disciplinarian of the Wahhabee sect, had presented his pharisaical demeanour and sour face in our courtyard. These men were spies in the service

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of the Riaḍ government, sent express to see what was going on in Ḥā'yel; they were often to be met with in the streets and market-place, observing all, shunned by all, yet treated by all with cautious respect. Strangers and Christians like ourselves could not expect to escape their notice, indeed we had a very considerable share of it, and the antipathy which their words did not express was yet no secret. "Hearts see each other," is a common and very expressive Arab saying; and an enemy is soon distinguished, however disguised in language, and even in features. Nor are the Arabs remarkably skilful in concealing their feelings, I should rather say the contrary; their emotions are for the most part too impetuous not to betray themselves in gest and expression; certainly, taking them altogether, they are far outdone by Turks and Indians in the science of dissimulation; nay, even by some branches of the great European family. However, the Nejdeans, who are the calmest, have also the reputation of being the deepest among their countrymen.

But a more important lesson was yet to learn. 'Obeyd-eḍ-Ḍe'eb, or "'Obeyd the wolf," to give him his popular surname, the same of whom I have before spoken as brother of the deceased prince 'Abd-Allah, and uncle of Ṭelāl, had been absent from Ḥā'yel during the first three weeks of our stay, or nearly so. He now returned, and at once occupied himself with the two foreigners who had found their way into his nephew's capital.

That a Wahhabee party should exist in a government first founded by Wahhabee influence, close watched by Wahhabee jealousy, and nominally itself tributary to Nejed; that this party should reckon in its ranks men even of the highest birth and influence, of the royal family and near the throne, cannot be wondered at; indeed, the wonder would be were it otherwise. This party is, indeed, at the present epoch small in number, but is formidable through its unity of purpose, and the powerful support given it from the southern or Wahhabee frontier. The most and chiefest of its partisans are gathered together in Ḥā'yel, but no small number of its members are scattered throughout the province. Its head and pivot is 'Obeyd.

We have already seen his elder brother 'Abd-Allah a volun-

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teer of high trust and consideration in the armies of Turkee, and bearing a conspicuous part in the eventful fortunes of the Nejdean dynasty during its most critical period. But 'Abd-Allah, though intimately connected, whether soldier or prince, with the Wahhabee government, seems to have had personally very little or perhaps no sympathy with the dogmas of the sect; he was a political ally, nowise a disciple. Not so his haughty and hot-headed brother 'Obeyd. His mind found in the fanaticism of Nejed its congenial element, and he plunged into it heart and brain, till it may be doubted whether Riad itself contains a more thorough-going Wahhabee than 'Obeyd-ebn-Rasheed of Ḥā'yel.

An excellent warrior, of undisputed skill and valour, versed alike in all the resources of deceit and violence, of bloodshed and perjury, he was eminently qualified to become the apostle of his sect in Shomer and its provinces. With his own hand, if report say true, he had slain no less than eight hundred "infidels" (that is, enemies), not to count the thousands slaughtered by his followers, and many were the trees once consecrated by popular veneration that he had cut down, many the sepulchres, honoured for centuries by devout visits and sacrifices, he had levelled with the surrounding dust, in compliance with the expressive laconism of the Wahhabee formula, "Kheyr el ḳeboor ed-dowāris," "The best sepulchres are those which have ceased to exist." My readers will probably remember how the same sectaries treated the tomb of their own avowed prophet Mahomet at Medinah, and may hence imagine what little grace monuments of more equivocal orthodoxy would find in the eyes of 'Obeyd and his fellows.

During the reign of 'Abd-Allah the greater part of the external administration, summed up pretty nearly in the successive subjugation of villages, towns, and provinces, was left to the "Wolf," who assuredly did his best to deserve his name; thirty years of peace have not sufficed to re-people several of the tracts which he then ravaged. His princely brother profited by the acquisitions of territory thus obtained, and contented himself with the quieter but humaner work of organisation at Ḥā'yel. But when 'Abd-Allah died, the ambition of 'Obeyd, no longer satisfied with the blood-stained laurels of his campaign,

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aspired to a regal crown, and the boyish age of Ṭelāl, then barely in his twenty-first year, seemed to leave him an open field. But Ṭelāl though young in days was old in counsel, and had so effectually attached to his interests the town nobility and the other local chiefs who had small relish for the revival of the Coran, that 'Obeyd was speedily compelled to desist from his pretensions.

Henceforth Ṭelāl employed his uncle much in the way that a surly mastiff is kept in the farmyard of some wealthy proprietor, where his duty is to growl at or to bite, and at times to range about the grounds and worry strangers. The young monarch entrusted 'Obeyd with distant forays, where there was more need of killing than of permanent conquest, and above all those directed against Bedouin tribes or the rougher mountain districts—not perhaps without a secret hope that his dear uncle might on some such occasion eternize his earthly honours by the unfading glories of martyrdom. But the proverb, equally current in Arabia and in England, "'tis long ere the devil dies," has met with another exemplification in the person of this bloody and deceitful but long-lived man.

Similarity of character and of religious opinions had led to an intimacy of long standing between 'Obeyd and 'Abd-Allah, son of Feyṣul at Riad. A close and loving correspondence was kept up between these well-matched friends, altogether in the interests of the Wahhabee party, and not over favourable to Ṭelāl, whom 'Obeyd denounced as a mere latitudinarian, little better than a disguised infidel, and one who basely preferred the visible and material prosperity of his kingdom and subjects to the unity of the true faith and the triumph of Wahhabee monotheism. 'Obeyd, on the contrary, was now the mainspring of the faction in Shomer, and his palace the daily resort of Nejdean zealots and disciplinarians. Here all whom the desire of plunder and the love of despotism drew into the cause would meet together and inveigh against the prevailing laxities and abominations; against commerce, tobacco, and polytheism. Never absent from public prayers in the mosque, 'Obeyd would there take the precedence, which his nephew readily abandoned him, and often go through the duties of Imām and preacher too, with a zeal more worthy of imitation than successful in obtaining it.

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Lastly, to prove himself deficient in no point of the most correct orthodoxy, he built for himself a spacious harem in a rural palace without the town, and there the number of his wives and concubines befitted a genuine disciple of him "whose delight" (to quote Mahomet's own words about himself) "God had ordained to be in women." Indeed, at the age of seventy, or more, and while we were ourselves at Ḥā'yel, he added a new partner to the long list of ladies already in hand.

Such was 'Obeyd, who now returned to the capital from a foray in which he had shown all the vigour and ferocity of youth, and found the Christian doctors established within its precincts. Had he been absolute lord and master here, our stay would not have been much prolonged. But aware of the favour we enjoyed at court and among the townsmen, he restrained himself; and where the wolf's skin was not long enough, eked it out with the fox's, after the prudent counsel of the Macedonian Philip.

On the second day of his arrival, towards noon, he came to our door on horseback, accompanied by a dozen retainers. His greeting was that of the greatest apparent cordiality; he offered his hand for a downright shake, and expressed his satisfaction at finding us the guests of his nephew, and, consequently, his own.

We had not even yet been fully informed of his real character. Arabs, even when most communicative in their talk, never forget the laws of prudence when a third party has to be mentioned, and do not like to discuss an absent individual, especially if his presence may be shortly expected. So that general phrases and anecdotes of no particular bearing were all that, up to this date, we had heard of 'Obeyd. His tall stature, absolutely unbowed by years, his strongly-marked features, and his easy, soldier-like manner, told much in his favour at a first appearance. But I cannot easily forget the effect produced on me by the cold look of his large grey eye; it seemed to belong to a different face, so strangely did it contrast with the expression of the rest of his countenance.

Nothing could be more open and cheerful than the tone of his conversation, and he showed a strong desire to be fully acquainted with all about us, merely in order to help us according to his means. His visits to our lodgings were almost

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daily, and he begged us in return to be his guests as frequently as we could. His town palace was, my readers may remember, nearly opposite to that of Ṭelāl; and here 'Obeyd possessed a large garden, newly planted and uncommonly well arranged, for he brought his energetic activity to bear on whatever he undertook, and showed no less vigour in digging a well or conducting a water-channel than in burning a village and cutting infidels to pieces. Within this garden it was his wont to have carpets spread at evening under the trees near the palace wall, and here he would pass the first hours of the night with friends selected to suit his purposes or agree with his tastes. To these "soirées" he often called us, and would then, in the freedom of the dusk, hold discourse on religion or politics in the manner best adapted to discover from our answers what were our personal opinions and intentions. At last, between direct enquiry and close observation, he ended by forming an approximately correct idea of who we were and what had brought us to Ḥā'yel. All this took place near the date of our familiar interviews with Zāmil and Ṭelāl.

A display of friendship above what circumstances seemed exactly to warrant had put us somewhat on our guard at the outset, and a hint thrown out now and then by those who noticed 'Obeyd's growing familiarity tended still more to awake our mistrust. But it was not long before we obtained a fuller knowledge of our dangerous friend.

'Abd-el-Maḥsin had not been put into the secret, at least we had determined to make him no special communications on that point. But perhaps he had heard from Ṭelāl something of what was going on, or perhaps native sagacity and old experience led him to conjectures not far removed from the truth. Whatever it were, he was much too polite to make us aware in a direct manner that he saw through an incognito which we had not thought fit to unveil for him. But when he became aware of the attentions paid us by 'Obeyd, and our frequent meetings, friendship or prudence prompted him to put us on our guard. He therefore acquainted us with all the previous history and actual position of this chief, and concluded by describing him as the very representative of the anti-government or opposition party in Shomer. What 'Abd-el-Maḥsin stated,

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'Obeyd himself confirmed shortly after in a curious manner, when, like most men who act a part, he for an instant forgot his mask and allowed us a glimpse of his true face—momentary, but more than sufficient.

One morning he had sent for me to see an individual of his household who stood in need of medical treatment. I came, accompanied by my acting servant, Barakāt. While we were yet within 'Obeyd's palace, we fell into conversation with him touching the events then going on in the neighbouring pashalics of Syria and Bagdad, on Christian influence and Mahometan reaction. 'Obeyd kept up awhile the impartial style which he usually affected before us, and seemed to take pleasure in the prospects of advancement and amelioration opening in the East. Suddenly an electric shock of his genuine feelings got the better of his assumed demeanour; his conciliatory tone and smooth phrases changed into the language of hate and open defiance, and he burst out into violent invectives against innovators, Christians, temporizers, and all who did not hold fast by the old purity and exclusiveness of Islam; till, with a hideous expression of concentrated rage, he said, "But you, whoever you may be, know this, that should my nephew and his people and all Arabia with them think fit to apostatize, and there be left in the entire world only one Muslim, I will be that one." Then all at once, feeling that he had gone too far, he broke off, and returned without transition or gradation like the shifting of a scene to his open smile and friendly chat, as though he had never known suspicion or anger. But we had seen enough, and from that hour visits and intercourse were at an end.

Soon after Zāmil brought us the news that 'Obeyd had sought out Ṭelāl, who in general kept out of his way the utmost possible, and had held a long and secret conversation with him, about what was easy to guess. This explained why the monarch hesitated to give us an answer, and put off our second audience from day to day. He had in his path one almost his equal in birth and power, a near relative and a yet nearer enemy, who could and did report his every word and step to the Wahhabee despot, and who might bring him into serious difficulties. In truth the position was not a pleasant one, but Ṭelāl was not to be so baffled; he took his time and his measures.

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The pilgrim road in the neighbourhood of Medinah was infested by marauding bands of the Ḥarb and Benoo-'Āteeyah Bedouins whom Ṭelāl had promised to punish. He now persuaded 'Obeyd, always ready for military work, to take the lead of an expedition against these robbers, meaning thus to procure his absence for a few days from Ḥā'yel. Orders were given to collect a suitable number of troops. Ḥā'yel itself furnished about a hundred, an equal contingent was supplied by Kefār, and the villages of the vicinity were laid under contribution, till four hundred armed men were ready to take the field. The common rendezvous was at the capital, without the northern gate, for it is the custom to set out a few miles in the opposite direction to that really intended, which was here the south-west. In this way rumour is often baffled, and the enemy led to suppose the attack destined for some other than himself. For the same reason the ultimate object in view is commonly kept a secret from the soldiers themselves, who only know in a general way that they have to march somewhere and fight somebody. When the day came for starting (it was the 4th of September), 'Obeyd caused his tent to be pitched in the plain without the northern walls; and there reviewed his forces. About one-third were on horseback, the rest were mounted on light and speedy camels; all had spears and matchlocks, to which the gentry added swords; and while they rode hither and thither in sham manœuvres over the parade-ground, the whole appearance was very picturesque and tolerably martial. 'Obeyd now unfurled his own peculiar standard, in which the green colour distinctive of Islam had been added border-wise to the white ground of the ancestral Nejdean banner, mentioned fourteen centuries back by 'Omar-ebn-Kelthoom, the poet of Ṭaghleb, and many others. Barakāt and myself mixed with the crowd of spectators. 'Obeyd saw us, and it was now several days since we had last met. Without hesitating, he cantered up to us, and while he tendered his hand for a farewell shake, he said: "I have heard that you intend going to Riaḍ; there you will meet with 'Abd-Allah the eldest son of Feyṣul; he is my particular friend; I should much desire to see you high in his good graces, and to that end I have written him a letter in your behalf, of which you yourselves are to be the bearers;

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you will find it in my house, where I have left it for you with one of my servants." He then assured us that if he found us still at Ḥā'yel on his return, he would continue to befriend us in every way; but that if we journeyed forward to Nejed, we should meet with a sincere friend in 'Abd-Allah, especially if we gave him the letter in question.

He then took his leave with a semblance of affectionate cordiality that made the bystanders stare; thus supporting to the last the profound dissimulation which he had only once belied for a moment. The letter was duly handed over to us the same afternoon by his head-steward, whom he had left to look after the house and garden in his absence. Doubtless my readers will be curious to know what sort of recommendation 'Obeyd had provided us with. It was written on a small scrap of thick paper, about four inches each way, carefully folded up and secured by three seals. However, "our fears forgetting manners," we thought best with Hamlet to make perusal of this grand commission before delivering it to its destination. So we undid the seals with precautions admitting of reclosing them in proper form, and read the royal knavery. I give it word for word; it ran thus: "In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate, We 'Obeyd-ebn-Rasheed salute you, O 'Abd-Allah son of Feyṣulebn-Sa'ood, and peace be on you, and the mercy of God and His blessings." (This is the invariable commencement of all Wahhabee epistles, to the entire omission of the complimentary formulas used by other Orientals.) "After which," so proceeded the document, "we inform you that the bearers of this are one Seleem-el-'Eyṣ, and his comrade Barakāt-esh-Shāmee, who give themselves out for having some knowledge in"—here followed a word of equivocal import, capable of interpretation alike by "medicine" or "magic," but generally used in Nejed for the latter, which is at Riaḍ a capital crime. "Now may God forbid that we should hear of any evil having befallen you. We salute also your father Feyṣul, and your brothers, and all your family; and anxiously await your news in answer. Peace be with you." Here followed the signet impression.

A pretty recommendation, especially under the actual circumstances. However, not content with this, 'Obeyd found means

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to transmit further information regarding us, and all in the same tenour, to Riaḍ, as we afterwards discovered. For his letter, I need hardly say that it never passed from our possession, where it yet remains as an interesting autograph, to that of 'Abd-Allah; with whom it would inevitably have proved the one only thing wanting, as we shall subsequently see, to make us leave the forfeit of our lives in the Nejdean man-trap. Meanwhile it helped us thus far, by giving us a clue to the conduct we had to observe in the Wahhabee court.

Without showing the epistle itself to Zāmil, we let him know in a casual manner that 'Obeyd had written for us an introduction to the son of Feyṣul. Zāmil, fearing that we might be less aware of 'Obeyd's intentions than we really were, begged us most earnestly not to be the bearers of the letter, of whose contents he had a shrewd guess. We promised him to be discreet, but did not tell him more, satisfied with this additional proof of his sincerity.

'Obeyd was now at a distance, and Ṭelāl felt himself at liberty to proceed with us; and accordingly on the 6th of the month we received his orders to meet him privately in Zāmil's Ḳ'hāwah an hour or so after noon. To the Ḳ'hāwah we went, and a slave was stationed at the outer door to prevent interruption from unseasonable visitors. We had not been ten minutes at the rendezvous when Ṭelāl came, accompanied by two swordsmen, whom he left outside. He was plainly dressed, his look was serious even more than wont, and after seating himself he remained some time in a silence which we did not interrupt. At last he raised his eyes, and looking me hard in the face, said: "You would not be imprudent enough to require, nor I to give, a formal and official answer to communications like yours, and in such a state of things. But this much I, Ṭelāl, will say: be assured now and ever of my good will and countenance; you must now continue your journey; but return in whatever fashion you may, and I hope it will be before long, your word shall pass here as law, and whatever you may wish to see done, shall be exactly complied with throughout the limits of my government. Does this satisfy you?" added he. I replied that my utmost desires went no farther; and we shook hands in mutual pledge.

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He then declared that he had no objections to our visiting the Wahhabee capital, but that he much recommended us to be prudent and wary, and that, in a word, least said there would be soonest mended; nor were we likely to find in Riaḍ any one high or low fitted for our confidence. He added that 'Obeyd might return shortly, and that in consequence we had better lose no time in setting out, that he had already given orders to a party of Ḳaseem travellers who were bound for Bereydah to take us with them, and that they were awaiting our leisure.

He was evidently in some anxiety about the result of our expedition, both on his own account and ours, and seemed to consider the remainder of our journey likely to turn out more hazardous than we yet thought it. His fears were nohow exaggerated, as we found when once within the Nejdean territory.

I asked him, more out of trial than anything else, if he would not give us an introductory letter in his name to the Wahhabee monarch. "There would be little use in that," said he, "and a recommendation of mine would hardly make him think the better of you." In its place he then dictated to Zāmil, for Ṭelāl himself is no scribe, a passport or general letter of safe conduct, enough to ensure us good treatment within the limits of his rule, and even beyond. I subjoin the translation for the benefit of the Foreign Office and all therein employed.

"In the name of God the Merciful, we, Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed, to all dependent on Shomer who may see this, peace be with you and the mercy of God. Next, we inform you that the bearers of this paper are Seleem-el-'Eyṣ-Abou-Maḥmood and his associate Barakāt, physicians, seeking their livelihood by doctoring, with the help of God, and journeying under our protection, so let no one interfere with or annoy them, and peace be with you." Here followed the date.

When this was written, Ṭelāl affixed his seal, and rose to leave us alone with Zāmil, after a parting shake of the hand, and wishing us a prosperous journey and speedy return. We, too, had at that time some idea of repassing by Ḥā'yel on our homeward way, but after circumstances conducted us by a different and a more instructive, though a longer route. Nothing now remained but to make our preparations for de-

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parture; we had obtained sufficient knowledge of the Shomer capital and its denizens, while far the greater part of our journey lay yet before us, and the autumn was already drawing on. Besides, any notable prolongation of our stay at Ḥā'yel might be dangerous both for ourselves and for Ṭelāl; we were watched by the spies of 'Obeyd and Feyṣul, and so was the monarch also. The Bagdad merchants, too, who formed a numerous and not uninfluential body in the town, looked on us with positive dislike, supposing us in reality Damascenes, for whom the Shiy'aees bear an especial and hereditary hatred, that twelve centuries have rather increased than diminished. Accordingly, though in most respects so dissident from the Wahhabee sectarians, they now sided with them in one thing, and that was in giving us askance looks of no friendly import, and in saying of us all the harm imaginable, whenever they could safely do so, I mean among themselves and behind our backs. Moreover, my stock of remedies was limited, and I had cause to fear lest too much expenditure of them in one place might barely leave us enough to suffice for the practice awaiting us in the rest of our long journey. Lastly, it need hardly be said that Ṭelāl's recommendation to set out was, in our position, fully equivalent to a command. Yet with all these motives for going, I could not but feel reluctant to quit a pleasing town, where we certainly possessed many sincere friends and well-wishers, for countries in which we could by no means anticipate equal favour or even equal safety. Indeed, so ominous was all that we heard about Wahhabee Nejed, so black did the landscape before us look, on nearer approach, that I almost repented of my resolution, and was considerably inclined to say, "Thus far enough, and no farther."

But "over shoes over boots," and the "tra Beatrice e te è questo muro" of the Florentine, though in a somewhat altered sense, ran in my memory, and gave me courage. And then we had already got so far that to turn back from what was yet to traverse, be it what it might, would have been an unpardonable want of heart. Hardly had Ṭelāl left the Ḳ'hāwah, when we requested Zāmil to let us know where we were to find out our destined companions for the road. He answered that they had received orders to come in quest of us, and that they would

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unfailingly present themselves at our house the very same day.

Before evening three men knocked at our door; they were our future guides. The eldest bore the name of Mubārek, and was a native of the suburbs of Bereydah; all three were of the genuine Ḳaseem breed, darker and lower in stature than the inhabitants of Ḥā'yel, but not ill-looking, and extremely affable in their demeanour. Mubārek told us that their departure from Ḥā'yel had been at first fixed for the morrow, or the 7th of the month, but that owing to some delay on the part of their companions, for the band was a large one, it had been subsequently put off to the 8th or the day after. Such procrastinations are of continual occurrence in the East, where the mode of travelling renders them unavoidable, and one must be prepared for them and take them as they come, under penalty of making oneself ridiculous by unavailing impatience. We now struck a bargain with Mubārek for the hire of two of his camels to bear ourselves and our chattels; the price was almost ridiculously small, even after making allowance for the comparatively high value of money in these inland regions; and we were glad to see that the polite and chatty manners of our new guides promised us an agreeable journey.

We had soon made all necessary arrangements for our departure, got in a few scattered debts, packed up our pharmacopœia, and nothing now remained but the pleasurable pain of farewells. They were many and mutually sincere. Meta'ab had indeed made his a few days before, when he, a second time, left Ḥā'yel for the pastures; Ṭelāl we had already taken leave of, but there remained his younger brother Moḥammed to give us a hearty adieu of good augury. Most of my old acquaintance or patients, Ḍoḥey' the merchant, Moḥammed the judge, Doheym and his family, not forgetting our earliest friend Seyf the chamberlain, Sa'eed the cavalry officer, and others of the court, freemen and slaves, white or black (for negroes readily follow the direction indicated by their masters, and are not ungrateful if kindly treated while kept in their due position), and many others of whose names Homer would have made a catalogue and I will not, heard of our near departure, and came to express their regrets, with hopes of future meeting and return. For my own

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part, I then felt as if I should be well pleased were such hopes one day to be realized; yet how improbable!

'Abd-el-Maḥsin, too, accompanied by Bedr, the eldest of Ṭelāl's sons, came a little before evening to see us a last time and bid us God-speed. All along he had been our daily and welcome companion, and his cultivated and well-stored mind, set off by ready eloquence, had done much to charm our stay and to take off the loneliness that even in the midst of a crowd is apt to weigh on strangers in a foreign land. The boy, too, Bedr, was much what his father must have been at that age; we had helped to cure him of some slight feverish attacks not uncommon at that time of life, and our young patient showed in return steady gratitude and simple attachment, more, perhaps, than is customary among children, at least of high birth, while his modest and polite manners would have done credit to a European court education. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin assured us, in Ṭelāl's name and his own, that we carried with us the good-will of all the court, and we sat thus together till sunset, staving off the necessity of separating by word and answer that had no meaning, except that we could not make up our minds to part.

But at fall of night, our last night at Ḥā'yel, we had a more important visit to receive. In the dusk Zāmil came, and having stationed his negro Soueylim at the street door, to preclude chance intruders, remained with us in long and affectionate talk, pledging his active support and entire co-operation for whatever measures after times might bring, renewing his recommendations of the greatest caution to be observed among the Wahhabees, pointing out the dangers possibly before us, and the means to avoid, or at least diminish them, and finally entreating us to send him a few lines from Riad, whereby to inform his master and himself, under covert phrases worded in seemingly medical import, of our own personal safety, and the result of our proceedings at the capital. We, too, begged him to assure Ṭelāl of our entire confidence in his good faith and honour, and to put his mind at rest about our discretion and wariness in word and deed. He embraced us, and departed under the star-light.

Early next morning, before day, Mubārek and another of his countrymen, named Dahesh, were at our door with the camels.

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Some of our town friends had also come, even at this hour, to accompany us as far as the city gates. We mounted our beasts, and while the first sunbeams streamed level over the plain, passed through the south-western portal beyond the market-place, the 8th of September 1862, and left the city of Ḥā'yel.

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CHAPTER VI

JOURNEY FROM ḤĀ'YEL TO BEREYDAH

More bleak to view, the hills at length recede,
And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend;
Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed,
Far as the eye discerns, without an end.—*Byron*

A NEW STAGE OF OUR JOURNEY — COMPARATIVE UNIMPORTANCE OF BEDOUINS IN CENTRAL ARABIA—OUR TRAVELLING COMPANIONS—THEIR CHARACTERS—HORSE TRADE FROM SHOMER TO KOWEYT—LIMITS OF DJEBEL 'ĀJA'—'EYN THEJJAJAH—VALLEY BETWEEN 'ĀJA AND SOLMA —ATTACK OF ḤARB BEDOUINS—DJEBEL SOLMA—TOMB OF ḤĀṬIM-EṬ-ṬĀ'I—HIS HISTORY—ANECDOTE—FEYD—ITS GOVERNOR AND COURT OF JUSTICE — DESCRIPTION OF THE VILLAGE — ṢOLIBAH ENCAMPMENT — UPPER ḲASEEM—ITS TERRITORIAL FEATURES—ARAB POETRY—NEJED—VEGETATION — SPRINGS — WATERSHED OF NORTHERN ARABIA, WHEREABOUTS—MEANS OF ASCERTAINING GROUND ELEVATION—ANIMAL LIFE —ḲEFA, ITS APPEARANCE—ḲOSEYBAH—KOWĀRAH, ITS SITUATION—ITS DOGS—WAHHABEE LIMIT—LOWER ḲASEEM—GENERAL VIEW OF ARABIA —ITS DIVISIONS AND UNIONS BEFORE, UNDER, AND AFTER MAHOMET—PERIOD OF THE CALIPHS—RIVALRY BETWEEN NEJED AND ḤEJĀZ—PARTIAL INDEPENDENCE OF SHOMER AND CENTRAL ARABIA—REMOVAL OF THE CALIPHATE TO BAGDAD—ITS RESULTS—CARMATHIAN OUTBREAK, AND FINAL SEPARATION OF ARABIA FROM THE CALIPHS—EBN-DĀRIM, HIS RISE, CONQUESTS, AND POWER—HIS DYNASTY IN ḲASEEM—ITS DECLINE — RESTORATION OF PAGANISM IN ḲASEEM — CHARACTER OF ARAB PAGANISM—STONE CIRCLE OF 'EYOON—TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF LOWER ḲASEEM—ITS CULTURE—PALM GROVES, COTTON, AND CURIOUS NARCOTIC PLANT — CHARACTER OF THE INHABITANTS — THEIR INTERCOURSE WITH ḤEJĀZ — ITS EFFECTS — CABUL DARWEESHES — ON THE DARWEESH DISGUISE ASSUMED BY SOME TRAVELLERS—ITS INCONVENIENCES — TRAGIC INCIDENT — ARAB DISPOSITIONS TOWARDS CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL AND EUROPEANS IN PARTICULAR—'EYOON—FOLEYḤ'S SUPPER —ROAD TO BEREYDAH—GHĀṬ—FALSE ALARM—DISTANT VIEW OF BEREYDAH—SUBURB OF DOWEYR—MUBĀREK'S COTTAGE—FAMILY LIFE.

ANOTHER stage of our way. From Gaza to Ma'ān, from Ma'ān to the Djowf, from the Djowf to Ḥā'yel, three such had now been gone over, not indeed without some fatigue or discomfort, yet at comparatively little personal risk, except what nature herself, not man, might occasion. For to cross the stony desert

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of the northern frontier, or the sandy Nefood in the very height of summer, could not be said to be entirely free from danger, where in these waterless wastes thirst, if nothing else, may alone, and often does, suffice to cause the disappearance of the over-adventurous traveller, nay, even of many a Bedouin, no less effectually than a lance thrust or a musket ball. But if nature had been so far unkind, of man at least we had hitherto not much to complain; the Bedouins on their route, however rough and uncouth in their ways, had, with only one exception, meant us fairly well, and the townsmen in general had proved friendly and courteous beyond our expectation. Once within the established government limits of Ebn-Rasheed and among his subjects, we had enjoyed our share in the common security afforded to wayfarers and inhabitants for life and property, and been thus relieved from that constant undercurrent of anxiety which the Syrian traveller, even on the high road from Damascus to Aleppo, cannot always get rid of; while good success had hitherto, by God's blessing, accompanied our going out and our coming in, whether under the assumed character of M.D.'s, or in the more special objects and researches of our journey. "Judge of the day by its dawn," say the Arabs; and although this proverb, like all proverbs, does not always hold exactly true, whether for sunshine or cloud, yet it has its value at times. And thus, whatever unfavourable predictions or dark forebodings our friends might hint regarding the inner Nejed and its denizens, we trusted that so favourable a past augured somewhat better things for the future.

From physical and material difficulties like those before met with, there was henceforward much less to fear. The great heats of summer were past, the cooler season had set in; besides, our path now lay through the elevated table-land of Central Arabia, whose northern rim we had already surmounted at our entrance on the Djebel Shomer. Nor did there remain any uncultivated or sandy track to cross comparable to the Nefood of Djowf between Ḥā'yel and Riaḍ; on the contrary, we were to expect pasture lands and culture, villages and habitations, cool mountain air, and a sufficiency if not an abundance of water. Nor were our fellow companions now mere Bedouins and savages, but men from town or village life, members of

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organized society, and so far civilized beings. This anticipatory programme, partly gathered from report, and partly from reasonable conjecture of what must be, was not only encouraging, but almost inviting to our mind. For any peculiar difficulties from the Wahhabee government and bigoted narrow-mindedness, we trusted in Him who had led us thus far safely, to carry us through to the end. Meanwhile we knew that for five or six days yet our road was to be within Ṭelāl's frontiers, and thus far at any rate we might hold ourselves secure from danger. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," we thought and said too, and leaving the morrow to take thought for the things of itself, set out in hope and cheerfulness.

When adieus, lookings back, wavings of the hand, and all the customary signs of farewell and good omen were over between our Ḥā'yel friends and ourselves, we pursued our road by the plain which I have already described as having been the frequent scene of our morning walks; but instead of following the south-westerly path towards Kefār, whose groves and roof-tops now rose in a blended mass before us, we turned eastward, and rounded, though at some distance, the outer wall of Ḥā'yel for nearly half an hour, till we struck off by a south-easterly track across stony ground, diversified here and there by wells, each with a cluster of gardens and a few houses in its neighbourhood. At last we reached a narrow winding pass among the cliffs of Djebel 'Āja', whose mid-loop encircles Ḥā'yel on all sides, and here turned our heads to take a last far-off view of what had been our home, or the agreeable semblance of a home, for several weeks.

Our only companions as yet were Mubārek and Dahesh. We had outstripped the rest, whose baggage and equipments had required a more tedious arrangement than our own. However, this could not long continue; and accordingly after some hours of turning and twisting in the mountain gorges, we stopped near noon in a little shrubby plain, where our camels found pasture and we shade, to await the arrival of our lingering fellow travellers.

Before long they came up, a motley crew. Ten or thereabouts of the Ḳaseem; some from Bereydah itself, others from neighbouring towns, 'Eyoon, Rass, and Shebeybeeyah; two

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individuals who gave themselves out, but with more asseveration than truth, to be natives of Mecca itself; three Bedouins, two of whom belonged to the Shomer clan, the third an 'Anezah of the north; next a runaway negro conducting four horses, destined to pass the whole breadth of Arabia and to be shipped off at Koweyt on the Persian Gulf for Indian sale; two merchants, one from Zulphah in the province of Sedeyr, the other from Zobeyr near Baṣrah; lastly, two women, wives of I know not exactly whom in the caravan, with some small children: all this making up, ourselves included, a band of twenty-seven or twenty-eight persons, the most mounted on camels, a few on horseback, and accompanied by a few beasts of burden alongside—such was our Canterbury pilgrims' group.

"The more the merrier," says the proverb. And so it was for the most of our party, though we had an exception in the persons of the two self-indited Meccans, Moḥammed and Ibraheem, sour-tempered individuals, always complaining, quarrelling, and backbiting. They stated themselves to have been corn merchants, ruined in the great inundation, which carried away or injured a third of the sacred town in the autumn of 1861; and since that time had been travelling, so they said, from place to place and from chief to chief, to seek from the liberality of the faithful wherewithal to pay their debts on returning to their native city. But their statement abounded with intrinsic improbabilities, and when such were pointed out, as occasionally was the case, they had ready another entirely different story, equally false perhaps, of feud and manslaughter. The sum total was that they were beggars and impostors, and, so far as we could make out from circumstances hardly worth detailing, Moḥammed was a cook from Cairo, and Ibraheem a bankrupt shopkeeper, native of Gaza or thereabouts. They were, however, sufficiently acquainted with Mecca to have much to say about that place, and I learnt from them many curious particulars regarding the pilgrimage and its accompaniments. These two worthies gave us the unequivocal pleasure of their society not only the whole way to Bereydah, but even to Riaḍ itself, where, if my readers will allow me to anticipate for a moment the course of events, Ibraheem distinguished himself by stealing one of our saddle-bags on his departure.

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Meanwhile they claimed great respect from all on the score of their supposed origin from the Mahometan capital; but not meeting with what they expected throughout Nejed, where Mecca and the Meccans are in little repute, gave vent to their annoyance in bitter complaints, but to small purpose.

The 'Anezah Bedouin, Ghāshee, was a different and a more amusing character. Though young, he had roved over all that lies between Anatolia and Yemen, visited many cities, and made acquaintance with innumerable chiefs and tribes, amongst whom were some, thus I soon found to my great anxiety, with whom I had been myself personally intimate while in Syria. Indeed it was a remarkably good fortune that Ghāshee and I had never met under the tents of Fāris-ebn-Hoḍeyb or Ha'il-ebn-Djandul among the Sebaa' or the Soā'limah, or an awkward recognition, worse even than that of our Damascene friend at Ḥā'yel, must have resulted.

The Zobeyr merchant and his associate were polite and intelligent men, fairly conversable, and who told us much worth hearing; views and facts to be interwoven, where occasion serves, into the many-coloured web of this narrative.

Among the natives of Ḳaseem itself, one, by name Foleyḥ, an inhabitant of the large village called 'Eyoon, richly dressed and mounted on a handsome horse, was acknowledged by all for the most important personage in the caravan. He belonged to one of the old and noble families of his province, and was a landholder of more than ordinary wealth. When we reach 'Eyoon we shall be his guests at supper.

The other members of the caravan presented nothing worthy of especial notice, quiet business-like men, taken up with their own small affairs of commerce and cultivation, or absorbed in the passing events of the journey—every-day characters, soon known and soon forgotten. I must, however, make an exception in favour of the negro Ghorra: a thorough African, half-cracked, and a fugitive from his master at Medinah, he had sought and obtained a kind of protection from Ṭelāl at Ḥā'yel, and was now, legally or not, in possession of his liberty. A rich artisan of Shomer had entrusted him with four fine horses, and Ghorra, delighted with his newly acquired dignity of freeman and jockey, danced, grinned, sang, and diverted himself further by

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playing so many tricks and telling such extraordinary and unconceivable lies, that he often aroused the anger of the more serious Arabs. At Bereydah we parted, but met again at Riad, whither he had preceded us by a few days only; but those few had been well employed, and he had already obtained himself the reputation of being the greatest liar ever known in the Nejdean capital, no slight distinction all things considered.

This incident may have given rise in some of my readers to a desire of hearing something about the horse-trade carried on between Arabia and India. I shall have a better occasion for satisfying their wish rather farther on, namely, when we reach the eastern sea-coast; but I may already say, in a summary manner, that more than half of the export of Arab horses to Bombay passes by the seaport of Koweyt, especially since the growing importance of that active little town in late years. The animals themselves are generally from the north of Arabia, or the Syrian desert, and of real Arab, though not of Nejdean breed. In what consists the difference between ordinary Arab and Nejdean horses, how far the latter surpass the former, where they are to be found, and what becomes of them, are points which I must reserve till we reach the noble creatures in the heart of Nejed. But the former, of Shomer or 'Anezah breed, are high-blooded and often very perfect in all their points, and such were those which Ghorra now led for Koweyt.

Thus assembled, on we went together, now amid granite rocks, now crossing grassy valleys, till near sunset we stopped under a high cliff at the extreme southerly verge of Djebel 'Âja', or, in modern parlance, of Djebel Shomer. The mountain here extended far away to right and left; but in front a wide plain of full twenty miles across opened out before us, till bounded southwards by the long bluish chain of Djebel Solma, whose line runs parallel to the heights we were now to leave, and belongs to the same formation and rocky mass denominated in a comprehensive way the mountains of Ṭâ'i or Shomer. Solma is, however, in height and length unequal to 'Âja', for while this latter range crosses nearly two-thirds of Arabia in a continuous line, and attains at times an elevation of 1400 feet or thereabouts above the plain, Solma does not seem to own a crest of above seven or eight hundred feet at most; and besides,

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stops half-way in its course, so that our road-line, which may be assumed as a tolerably exact diameter or medial section of the Shomer district, passed the Solma heights just where they discontinue on the left, and so, skirting their extreme easterly verge, led to the lands beyond, whereas we had traversed Djebel 'Āja' midway.

Here—that is, where we now halted to make our evening meal, at the foot of Ajas—was a source of clear water, not undeservedly named by the people of the land, 'Eyn-eth-Thejjajah, sometimes called also Nebbajah, or "the abundant-gushing fountain." The full moon rose on the east over the great plain like the open sea; we lighted our fires and prepared our supper. This was simple enough—unleavened bread, and coffee to wash it down. Our only additional dainties were dried dates laid in at Ḥā'yel; no other kind of provision can bear the heat of day travelling in this climate. It was indeed September, but September in Arabia is not exactly September in England or Germany, though in these uplands the temperature was colder than the southerly degree of latitude taken alone might have led us to expect.

Scarcely was supper over and a pipe smoked than we remounted our camels, and rode slowly on under the glorious moonlight till it almost blended with the dawn. Our line of march crossed the plain at right angles to its length, and while we advanced by the deceptive glitter of the moonbeams, we soon lost all distinct view of the mountains before or behind us, and seemed to be in the midst of a vast whitish lake, where patches of dark green, formed by a kind of broom and similar shrubs, lay around like islands in the water. The soil here is a light earth mixed with sand, and so it continues throughout upper Ḳaseem; it is not unfertile, but is scantily supplied with water; offering tolerable pasture land for flocks and herds, but rarely presenting irrigation enough to merit a village. At last, fairly tired out and drunk with drowsiness, to translate the Arab phrase, we staggered off our camels to the ground, and there slept through the short cool hours of late night and early morning.

The whole of the next day, till about four in the afternoon,

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was pent in traversing what remained of this great plain. There we fell in with a danger entirely unexpected by myself and my companion, but against which the more experienced men of Ḳaseem had been all along on the look-out; indeed, it was precisely the fear of some such occurrence that had urged them to their forced night march and to the quickened pace of the following day.

This valley, the separation of Solma from 'Âja', is of a length much greater than its breadth, and attains westward the very neighbourhood of Medinah, thus opening out into the passes of Ḥejāz and the great pilgrim route a little above the town where Mahomet lies buried. Now it so happens that the portion of the Ḥajj road, corresponding to this opening, is, and always has been more than any other, infested by marauding Bedouins, principally of the Ḥarb tribe, who have often here stopped the entire pilgrim caravans in defiance of their Turkish guard, and whom the Ottoman authority has never been able to put down; at the same time the retreat afforded by the defiles of Ḥejāz renders these robbers in great measure secure against the central Arab governments, from whom the Bedouins have much more reason to fear than from all the bayonets of Constantinople. Now these same Ḥarb plunderers, not content with the booty captured in Ḥejāz, often take a run up the very valley which we were now crossing; and it requires all the vigilance and energy of Ṭelāl to prevent their inroads from becoming habitual, and thus interrupting the regular communication between his dominions and Nejed.

Our band, who had a wholesome fear of meeting with one of these nomade foray-parties, here quickened their pace, and the event justified their precautions. For, at about three in the afternoon, we saw some way off to our west a troop of these identical Bedouins coming up from the direction of Medinah. While they were yet in the distance, and half-hidden from view by the shrubs and stunted acacias of the plain, we could not precisely distinguish their numbers; but they were evidently enough to make us desire, with Orlando, "that we might be better strangers." On our side we mustered about fifteen matchlocks, besides a few spears and swords. The Bedouins had already perceived us, and continued to approach, though in the

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desultory and circuitous way which they affect when doubtful of the strength of their opponent; still they gained on us more than was pleasant.

Fourteen armed townsmen might stand for a reasonable match against double the number of Bedouins, and in any case we had certainly nothing better to do than to put a bold face on the matter. The 'Eyoon chief, Foleyḥ, with two of his countrymen and Ghāshee, carefully primed their guns, and then set off at full gallop to meet the advancing enemy, brandishing their weapons over their heads, and looking extremely fierce. Under cover of this manœuvre the rest of our band set about getting their arms ready, and an amusing scene ensued. One had lost his match, and was hunting for it in his housings, another in his haste to ram the bullet home had it stuck midway in the barrel, and could neither get it up nor down, the look of a third was rusty and would not do duty; the women began to whine piteously; the two Meccans, who for economy's sake were both riding one only camel, a circumstance which caused between them many international squabbles, tried to make their beast gallop off with them, and leave the others to their fate, while the more courageous animal, despising such cowardly measures, insisted on remaining with his companions and sharing their lot;—all was thoroughly Arab, much hubbub and little done. Had the menacing feint of the four who protected our rear proved insufficient, we might all have been in a very bad predicament, and this feeling drew every face with reverted gaze in a backward direction. But Providence willed our safety, and the Ḥarb banditti, intimidated by the bold countenance of Foleyḥ and his companions, wheeled about and commenced a skirmishing retreat, in which a few shots guiltless of bloodshed were fired for form's sake on either side, till at last our assailants fairly disappeared in the remote valley.

Our valiant champions now returned from pursuit, much elated with their success, and we journeyed on together, skirting the last rocky spur of Solma, close by the spot where Ḥātim Ṭā'i, the well-known model, half mythic and half historical, of Arab hospitality and exaggerated generosity, is said to be buried. My readers are perhaps acquainted with most of the anecdotes relative to this celebrated chief, and I shall therefore omit

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them all but one, however curious, for fear of a tedious because a twice-told tale. Ḥāṭim flourished about a hundred years or rather less before the Mahometan era, and the verses ascribed to him, if genuine, show him to have added the graces of poetry to his other numerous accomplishments. Whether he belonged or not to the Christian branch of that great tribe whence he derived his patronymic, is uncertain, though the records of his friendly dealings with the Greek or Grecized governors of Syria might seem to imply a similarity of religion with them. Mahometan chroniclers—and from them alone we learn the history of Ḥāṭim, often envelope in one common appellation of "Djohhāl," or "ignorants," all the inhabitants of the Arab Peninsula who lived before the preaching of Mahomet, whatever may have been their belief; sometimes, on the contrary, they discriminate between Christians and Pagans, but this is less frequent, unless there be some special cause. I should add that the Christianity of Arabia in those times was probably much less distinctive in its external and symbolical form than that prevalent in Greece or Rome. The tendency of the Arabs to make light of and even to dispense with whatever may be included under the title of ceremony and rubric is no less marked than the opposite inclination of the Western races to multiply the minutiæ of forms, and even to give them an almost excessive importance. Thus, no Mahometans are more neglectful of the precise exactitude required in the acquittance of religious duties than the Arab Wahhabees themselves, for all their Islamitic fervour in other respects; and I have myself observed much of a similar nature among the Christians of genuine Arab origin, who inhabit the tracts lying eastward of Damascus and the Jordan, though, indeed, these latter may also be influenced by the disposition common to all other persecuted sects in the Levant—Ansariens, Yezeedees, Isma'eelees, and their brethren—to render their outer life conformable to the dominant Islam, enough to avoid attracting special notice and dangerous observation, much as the whitening ermine eludes the hunter amid the snow. Hence, a hasty or superficial glance may often fail to discern them from the Mahometan population around; nor can their precautions be held discreditable to them in the present state of the country. But it is enough for us to

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have touched on a subject of wide bearing, and whose thorough investigation would require not a paragraph nor a chapter, but a volume. Let us now return to our road by Djebel Solma and the tomb of Ḥāṭim.

Here I should have liked to try the experiment made long since by the Yemanite chief 'Akrimah. For this prince, if Arab chronicles say true, which they sometimes do and sometimes do not, visited these very lands by the same route as ourselves; but coming up in the opposite direction, namely, from Yemen northwards, only a few years after the death of the Ṭā'iyee. On passing by the cairn that then marked his grave (for now nothing remains), 'Akrimah said jestingly to his companions, "Men report that Ḥāṭim, when alive, never sent a guest away empty; now, here we are at his tomb, our provisions have run short, and there is no village near; let us see whether, after death, he will do anything for us." With this he halted, and called out in a mocking tone, "O Ḥāṭim, here we stand at your door, 'Akrimah of Yemen, and my followers, all of us hungry and weary, so see to it if you can." Then, turning to his men, "Ḥāṭim," said he, "has, I fear, grown stingy in the other world, and we must manage for ourselves." Whereon the party dismounted close under the cairn, and bivouacked without supper for that evening. But at an early hour of the night 'Akrimah started up in terror, and aroused his nearest attendant with, "Put on your sword and come with me, there is something strange at work here. Thrice has Ḥāṭim appeared to me in my dream, in his hand a drawn sword dripping blood, and said, 'Akrimah of Yemen, you and your men shall be indeed my guests for this night. Now, therefore, make haste, and look after your camel, for I have given her a death-wound,' and with this he disappeared. Come along with me, and let us see what has happened."

They went accordingly in the dark to where the camels were crouched at a little distance, and found the choicest of them, precisely that on which 'Akrimah had been riding, struggling in the pangs of death. 'Akrimah put her out of her pain by cutting her throat, and then, being now provided, though not exactly in the way they desired, with butcher's meat enough and to spare, roused up the whole band. They then lighted fires, and passed

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the rest of the night in preparing and making a hearty meal of camel's flesh, Arab fashion.

"A sorry business this; we should have done better to let Ḥāṭim alone. Did ever anything but evil come out of Nejed?" said 'Akrimah next morning, when, for want of a beast, he was obliged to mount one belonging to a retainer, whom he took behind him on the cruppers, and the travellers moved slowly on to the north. When, behold, a small band coming rapidly to meet them from across the valley, and amongst them one who seemed by his dress their chief, mounted on a handsome horse, and leading alongside by a rope a very beautiful she-camel, better than that which 'Akrimah had been constrained to kill the evening before. When the parties met, after due salutation, "Know," said the young horseman, "that I am the son and heir of Ḥāṭim eṭ-Ṭā'i, at whose tomb you halted yesterday. Last night, during my sleep, my father visited me in a dream, and said, 'My son, 'Akrimah of Yemen and his companions have arrived at my home, and claimed my hospitality, but I had nothing by me of your world's food to set before them. So I obliged 'Akrimah to kill his own camel and to make a supper of her flesh, instead of what I would myself have set before them, had I now the means, as I have yet the will. Do you, therefore, without delay, take the best of your she-camels, and mount your horse that once was mine, and go to meet the men of Yemen; give 'Akrimah the camel in place of that he slew, lest his supper should have been at his cost, not mine, and add to the gift the horse you ride, lest he should say that Ḥāṭim was less liberal dead than alive.'" Having related this, the son of Ḥāṭim performed his father's injunctions, and putting 'Akrimah on horseback, walked before him, holding the bridle till they reached Djebel Shomer, where he insisted on their all remaining many days as guests in his father's house.

Perhaps we might have been less lucky than 'Akrimah, and though all of our party knew the oft-repeated tale, no one thought fit to try Ḥāṭim's post-mortem liberality. So, without stopping we crossed the low hills that here form a sort of offshoot to the Solma mountain, and limit the valley; and the last rays of the setting sun gilded to our view in a sandy bottom some way off the palm-trees of Feyd.

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This ancient village or townlet, mentioned by the famous Hariree in the sixth century of Islam, corresponding to the twelfth of our own era, is situated on one of the tracks that lead diagonally from Coufa or Meshid 'Alee to Medinah, and now belongs to the government of Ṭelāl. Its local chief or president is chosen from among the natives of the place, such being in general Ṭelāl's system, for it is only in rare instances and for very particular reasons that he appoints one of the capital or the central district to be prefect in a distant locality. In this his plan differs from that of the Wahhabee prince, of whose centralizing tendencies, manifested chiefly in the nomination of his subordinates and representatives, we have already seen something in the history of Ḳaseem, and shall yet learn more. But Ṭelāl is disposed to encourage provincialism even at the expense of centralization, wherever he can do so with safety; and this method is perhaps the best for all parties, whether governing or governed, though an opposite line of conduct is followed by many administrations in the East, and has found European imitators at times.

However, all rules admit of exceptions, and immediate recourse to the central authority becomes at times indispensable. Accordingly extraordinary commissioners are not unknown even in Arabia, and we now precisely happened to fall in with one. Quarrels had arisen between the inhabitants of Feyd, and the local governor had proved incompetent to re-establish peace and order, so that a king's officer from Ḥā'yel had just been sent to take cognizance of the matter. Hence, at the very hour when we entered the village, a little after sunset, a group of inhabitants clustered in an open space near the walls marked the presence of Ṭelāl's commissioner, who was there holding his court of justice.

In a country where every man is his own lawyer, and where the jury too is of a simpler formation and much less numerous than in English courts, criminal causes are comparatively soon settled. The head man of the place, the village Ḳadee, a personage never wanting even in the smallest Arab community, and two or three of the principal inhabitants, usually fill the place of jurors, though their verdict is after all rather of moral than of strictly legal weight. The office of crown advocate merges in the judge, and that of counsel in the accused party

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himself. Sometimes, however, the prosecution is conducted by the plaintiff, when distinct from the supreme authority itself, for instance, in cases of private murder and the like. I should add, that in Arabia the title of Ḳadee is far from equivalent to that of our English "judge," and implies a consultative rather than a judicial position, though the contrary is the rule in other parts of the East. We had the advantage of being present while sentence was passed on one of the Feyd culprits, and of witnessing its execution immediately after; it was identically the same with that which many a schoolboy in our own conservative island incurs from the justice of his offended master; and here also the sufferer screamed much more loudly than the light infliction warranted.

It is only fair to say that in capital proceedings, and indeed in all more serious affairs, Arab justice is by no means equally rough and ready. Witnesses are summoned and sworn in, the trial lasts many days, appeal from a lower to a higher tribunal up to that of the monarch himself is granted if asked, and after final sentence has been pronounced, execution is deferred for a space of never less than twenty-four hours and sometimes prorogued for weeks and months, till matters often end in a free pardon, or in a mitigation of the legal penalty. Nor can the most absolute rulers of Arabia violate with impunity the restrictions placed by a sense of responsibility and humanity on the too rapid course of such trials, or venture to condemn a subject to death in time of peace simply on their own authority, or without the stated intervention of legal procedures. Here, again, we may note a most important resemblance between the Arab pure and the European.

We had halted close by the village gate. But Mubārek judged, and probably with good reason, that among men whose whole thoughts were taken up by feuds and trials, our supper might stand a chance of being but a poor one if sought for in the cottages of Feyd itself. It happened that some Ṣolibah Bedouins were encamped at a few minutes' distance from the village, and to their tents we directed our camels, alighted, and after a brief introduction we had the pleasure of seeing a faint column of smoke arise behind the tent walls—in a land like this, a sure sign of kitchen operations.

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Feyd may be taken as a tolerable sample of the villages met with throughout Northern or Upper Ḳaseem, for they all bear a close likeness in their main features, though various in size. Imagine a little sandy hillock of about sixty or seventy feet high in the midst of a wide and dusty valley; part of the eminence itself and the adjoining bottom is covered by low earth-built houses, intermixed with groups of the feathery Ithel. The grounds in the neighbourhood are divided by brick walls into green gardens, where gourds and melons, leguminous plants and maize, grow alongside of an artificial irrigation from the walls among them; palms in plenty—they were now heavy laden with red-brown fruits; and a few peach or apricot trees complete the general lineaments. The outer walls are low, and serve more for the protection of the gardens than of the dwellings; here are neither towers nor trenches, nor even, at least in many places, any central castle or distinguishable residence for the chief; his habitation is of the same one-storied construction as those of his neighbours, only a little larger. Some of these townlets are quite recent, and date from the Shomer annexation, which gave this part of the province a degree of quiet and prosperity unknown under their former Wahhabee rulers.

Our supper was not of superfine quality, for the Ṣolibahs are poor, but it was abundant in quantity, and thereby well fitted for travellers like ourselves, after a long march of two days and a night with hardly any rest or pause. Gladly would I have taken the opportunity to try and find out something of the real tenets and practices of our hosts, these uncircumcised wanderers, the lasting record of Syrian or Arabian Christianity. But they were too reserved to give any other than negative signs of their mode of thought and customs, and we much too tired and sleepy for long researches.

Next morning, the 10th of September, we were all up by moonlight, two or three hours before dawn, and off on our road to the south-east. The whole country that we had to traverse for the next four days was of so uniform a character, that a few words of description may here serve for the landscape of this entire stage of our journey.

Upper Ḳaseem is an elevated plateau or steppe, and forms

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part of a long upland belt, crossing diagonally the northern half of the Peninsula; one extremity reaches the neighbourhood of Zobeyr and the Shaṭṭ-el-'Aarab, while the other extends downwards to the vicinity of Medinah. Its surface is in general covered with grass in the spring and summer seasons, and with shrubs and brushwood at all times, and thus affords excellent pasture for sheep and camels. Across it blows the fresh eastern gale, so celebrated in Arab poetry under the name of "Ṣeba Nejdin," or "Zephyr of Nejed" (only it comes from precisely the opposite corner to the Greek and Roman Zephyr), and continually invoked by sentimental bards to bring them news of imaginary loves or pleasing reminiscences. No wonder, for most of these versifiers being themselves natives of the barren Ḥejāz or the scorching Tehāmah, perhaps inhabitants of Egypt and Syria, and knowing little of Arabia, except what they have seen on the dreary Meccan pilgrim road, they naturally look back to with longing and frequently record whatever glimpses chance may have allowed them of the cooler and more fertile highlands of the centre, denominated by them Nejed in a general way, with their transient experience of its fresh and invigorating climate, of its courteous men and sprightly maidens.

But when, nor is this seldom, the sweet smell of Rĕnd, Khozāmah, Ṭhemām, and other aromatic thyme-like plants that here abound, mixes with the light morning breeze and enhances its balmy influence, then indeed can one excuse the raptures of an Arab Ovid or Theocritus, and appreciate—at least I often did—their yearnings after Nejed, and all the praises they lavish on its memory.

Then said I to my companion, while the camels were hastening
To bear us down the pass between Meneefah and Demar,*
"Enjoy while thou canst the sweets of the meadows of Nejed:
With no such meadows and sweets shalt thou meet after this evening.
Ah! heaven's blessing on the scented gales of Nejed,
And its greensward and groves glittering from the spring shower,
And thy dear friends, when thy lot was cast awhile in Nejed—
Little hadst thou to complain of what the days brought thee;
Months flew past, they passed and we perceived not,
Nor when their moons were new, nor when they waned."

—Regrets for an unwilling departure. Another, now far away

* Two hills on the frontier of Ḳaseem towards Medinah.

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from the land of his real or imaginary loves, thus expresses his longings:—

Ah! breeze of Nejed, when thou blowest fresh from Nejed,
Thy fanning adds love to my love and sorrow to my sorrow.
When the turtle-dove is cooing in the bright glancing morn
From its leafy cage over tangled tufts of thyme,
I wept as a very child would weep, and could bear up no longer,
And my heart revealed to itself its long-hidden secret.
Yet they say that when the beloved one is close at hand
Love cloys, and that distance, too, brings forgetfulness.
Presence and distance have I tried, and neither aught availed me,
Save that better is for me when the loved one's abode is near, than when it is distant;
Save that nearness of the loved one's abode gives little solace
Unless the loved one herself requite love with love.

But enough, I hope, to awake in the sympathetic reader something of the feelings with which myself, with two or three companions of more delicate mental fibre than the rest, made ourselves "as sad as night only for wantonness," by reciting scraps of Arab poetry, while the breeze of Nejed blew over us in the uplands of Nejed. And now let us return to the prosaic and actual features of the country.

Sometimes the plain sinks for miles together into a shallow irregular basin, where streams pour down and water collects in the rainy season, leaving pools not entirely dried up even in autumn. Here the alluvial soil bears a more vigorous crop of shrubs, diversified with occasional trees, generally Ṭalḥ and Nebaa', occasionally Sidr; the former is a large tree of roundish and scanty leafage, with a little dry berry for fruit, its branches are wide-spreading and thorny here and there; the second is more shrub-like in its growth, though its clustered stems often attain a considerable height; its leaf is very small, ovate, and of a bright green; the last is a little but elegant acacia. These same trees are, but more seldom, to be met with on the high grounds also, especially the Ṭalḥ. But the Ithel, a kind of larch, abundant throughout Arabia, though growing nowhere else, I believe, and the Ghaḍa euphorbia, prefer the sand-slopes and hollows.

All along this plateau, from distance to distance, and intersecting it at an acute angle, ran long and broad valleys of light soil, half chalk, half sand. In these natural trenches water is

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always present, not indeed on the surface, but wherever wells are sunk, which is generally in the neighbourhood of some little conical hillock, that seems placed there merely to serve as an indication where men may dig for the source of fertility.

This juxtaposition of small round mounds and springs occurs much too frequently to be casual, yet I do not quite understand the reason of it. The hillocks of which I speak are much too diminutive every way to serve as reservoirs of moisture for the sources close by, and far too low to play the part of mountains in attracting clouds and mist. They are water-marks and nothing more to all appearance, yet certainly they are not the work of art; and though one may at times, though seldom, see a well without a monticule of this kind and form by its side, I never remember coming on any of these isolated tumuli without its having a source at its foot. Nor is this freak of nature confined to central Arabia; we meet, not unfrequently, with a corresponding arrangement in the Cœlo-Syrian plain between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and much more in the desert or deserted land that lies east and north of Damascus, where some degree of resemblance can be already perceived between the topographical character of the country and that of Arabia itself. Geologists may perhaps offer an explanation of the fact, at least a theory.

Hard by the wells rise the villages of Upper Ḳaseem; they are, if I was rightly informed, about forty in number; their respective number of inhabitants appears to vary from five hundred to three thousand; the entire population may be reckoned at between twenty-five and thirty thousand souls, a slender amount considering the extent of the province. We passed eight villages on our way, and halted in four; one of these was Ḳefa, said to be the largest in the district. Every hamlet is surrounded by a proportional extent of palm-groves, gardens, and fields, reaching not unfrequently far down the valley, like a long green streak on a yellow carpet, along a series of wells, which mark the direction of some underground water-course. I was told that a new well opened to the east will often diminish the supply of a westerly source, a fact which may imply the general slope downwards of the continent in the latter direction.

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From my own observations I think that the watershed or highest line of the whole belt of land which lies between the Djowf northward and the steppe whose breadth we now crossed inclusively, should be sought for at about sixty miles due east of Ḥā'yel, thus corresponding in longtitude with the most elevated part of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, the "twisted mountain," whose steppes form the great central plateau of Nejed proper to the south. If this be the case, and I have myself little doubt on the matter, from reasons which I will give a few lines farther on, the backbone or main ridge of Arabia would bear from N.N.W. to S.S.E. between 45° and 46° longitude Greenwich, and from 29° to 24° latitude north; its greatest altitude is behind Djelājil in the province of Sedeyr, whence it gradually lowers till it is lost in the sandy desert of the south.

On each side of this ridge, and to the south also, Arabia slopes down coastwards to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, though with some local interruptions arising from the lateral chains of 'Āja', Solma, Ṭoweyḳ, and Dowāsir, besides the occasional anomalies presented by the seashore line and its craggy range, which rises to a great height in the northern Ḥejāz, Djebel 'Aaseer, some points of Yemen and Ḥaḍramaut, and yet more in 'Omān.

The entire district of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, and good part of Shomer, I visited in person, and whatever I there witnessed confirms this view of the general conformation of the Arab Peninsula. With two-thirds of the sea-coast I am also well acquainted, and thus far can speak with a tolerable degree of certainty. But having had no opportunity of travelling over the north-east corner of Arabia, namely, the triangle that lies eastward of the Djowf and Djebel Shomer and north of Sedeyr towards the upper part of the Persian Gulf and the Shaṭṭ, I must rely on the fidelity of information collected from natives, merchants, or wayfarers, men whose practical knowledge of the ground they travel, aided by facts like that just mentioned of the water-currents, gives to their statements on these points a certain degree of authority. The two merchants of Zobeyr and Baṣrah, our present road-companions, supplied me with some data about the north-east, all tending to the same purport. Thus they stated that the tracks from Ḳaseem to

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Baṣrah lay upland for most of the way; that the country became more and more barren till within three or four days of the Shaṭṭ, when pasture, and lastly cultivation, reappeared; that after some distance north water became very scarce, an unfailing indication of a raised land-level in these parts, and continued so till about eighty miles from the Shaṭṭ; that the air was cooler, and the like. I myself, whether in the neighbourhood of Ḥā'yel, or here, could, on looking eastwards, appreciate by the eye a sensible rise and a ridgy verge to the horizon, while the view to the west, wherever the crags of Shomer did not intervene, lay evenly at a shorter and downward curve. Lastly, the highest peaks of Djebel Shomer are situated, and this one may easily see on approaching Ḥā'yel, a little to the east of that town, and almost north of Ṭoweyḳ at its farthest roots; now it is well known that the elevation of a mountain range is in general proportioned to that of the adjoining plain, which we may therefore conclude to be here at its maximum.

Earnestly do I hope that future and better-provided travellers will work out and fill up the ground plan which I have thus attempted to trace, though unable to complete. But may it be permitted me to apologise for a sort of presumption in claiming to be heard on this difficult subject, a subject too in some sort out of my ordinary province of observation; however, long continued years of journeying, and such have been my lot, do at last empower the eye, and indeed all the senses, to measure height and distance, direction and level, with tolerable accuracy, even in the want of the instruments that modern science supplies to aid and rectify our rougher calculations. These instruments are indeed absolutely requisite wherever any pretension is made to minute precision and mathematical detail. But to these I have no claim, and my readers already know the circumstances which limited and simplified my baggage to the exclusion of many a useful but incompatible object. Yet I trust that my statements are correct so far as they go, and may be safely relied on for a basis and first step to the verification and reform of the Arabian map, especially in what regards the interior of the Peninsula.

Every day we made about twelve or fourteen hours' march, at a rate of about five miles per hour, or a little more,—

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the ordinary pace of a riding camel. We had nothing more to fear from Bedouins, and the few whom we might henceforth meet belonged to tribes of Ṭelāl's dominions, and were subject to his steady rule. I may as well here add, that towards the end of this same year 1862, Ṭelāl himself headed a successful campaign against the marauders of the Ḥarb clan, the same with whom we had met in the valley of Solma, and reduced them to submission sufficient for ensuring his own territories against further forays.

The moon was only a few nights after the full, and we had the advantage of her light for early starting. We would thus make our track, sometimes across the high grounds and pasture, sometimes traversing a sandy river-like valley, till day broke, and the sun rushed up, and shone on our left till noon, while we rode on, scattered along either side of the irregular streaks that marked the way, or in groups of twos and threes, or all together, while the men of Ḳaseem chatted and laughed, the merchants conversed, the Meccans quarrelled, the Bedouins, who sympathise little with the inhabitants of towns, nor overmuch with each other, rode in general each alone and at some distance; the negro ran after his horses, which kept getting loose, and went a-grazing or scampered out of reach; and the women, wrapped up from head to foot in their large indigo blue dresses, looked extremely like inanimate bundles to be taken to market somewhere; nobody talked to them, and they of course talked to nobody.

Every morning we halted for coffee-making; firewood was in plenty, and there was no particular hurry or fear of losing time. But we were dispensed from any more serious cookery, since henceforth our afternoon and night halts were always in the villages, where we seldom failed of a hospitable welcome; and were that not forthcoming, we could at any rate purchase wherewithal to make our evening meal.

The view was extensive, but rather monotonous. No high mountains, no rivers, no lakes, no streams; but a constant reiteration of the landscape features above described. Only we sometimes could distinguish far off to the east a few faint blue peaks, the extreme offsets of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, whither we were now slowly approaching. North, west, and south, all was open plain. But the breeze blew fresh and the sun shone bright,

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birds twittered in the brushwood, and lizards and Djerboo'as ran about lightly chirping on all sides, or a covey of partridges (it was September) whirred up at our approach, and a long file of gazelles bounded away from before us, then stopped a minute at gaze, and bounded off again. The camels were in good condition, and most of the riders in excellent humour.

Our first evening halt after Feyd was at Ḳefa. It is a large scattered village, situated in a sandy hollow, and not ill provided with water. Like many other hamlets of this province, this is a thriving and increasing place; indeed, we found the inhabitants busy at digging out and stone-binding a large new well; they had just reached the first indications of moisture at about twelve feet deep. The stone here is calcareous, and so it is in general towards the centre of the Peninsula; Djebel Ṭoweyḳ itself is chiefly of the same formation, unlike the black rock and reddish granite of Djebel Shomer. I do not remember seeing here any of the organic remains often traced in chalk and limestone; perhaps my research was itself too hasty.

In Ḳefa we remained an entire day. A tolerably large encampment of Shomer Bedouins, belonging to the 'Eyd branch of the clan, and inferior in nobility to their Dja'afar brethren, was close by the village; with the 'Eyd tents were intermixed some of the Ṭāmir tribe, whose ordinary resort is to the south of Solma, while that of the Shomer nomades is more to the north and east. We paid a visit to these dusky habitations, black as the curtains of Solomon, and were politely and hospitably received; the townsmen of Ḳefa, too, were very courteous, though of course less refined in their manner and less elegant in their dress than is wont at Ḥāy'el. There is here a native governor, and a Ḳadee also; the number of inhabitants cannot fall far short of three thousand.

Our next halting-place was Ḳoseybah, a small hamlet, but abounding in gardens and fruit. The little hill up whose eastern side the houses are built, is in other parts so thickly covered with Ithel and palm as to be almost picturesque. The wells are many, and I doubt not that should Ṭelāl's rule continue long undisturbed in these parts, Ḳoseybah may in due time become considerable.

The third evening passed at Kowārah. This large village,

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which might almost be called a town, lies in a wooded and well-watered hollow, where its groves form a beautiful backpiece to the broken and thickety ground in front. Around, the plain is excavated into cliffs from twenty to sixty feet high, and furrowed by watercourses, or rank with thick brushwood and long herbage. Here is the last southerly station of Ṭelāl's territory; here, too, as mostly elsewhere, the chief is of the natives of the soil, and order and security are the only tokens of central government. I mean order and security among and from bipeds; for the innumerable overgrown dogs of the village were certainly the most impudent and annoying that it was ever my bad luck to encounter. They prowled about all night, and no one could stir a step without having half a dozen of these wolfish creatures gnarling and yelping at his legs, while the provisions of the wayfarers suffered considerable detriment from their assaults. Warned by my experienced companions, I put a large skin yet half full of excellent dates from Ḥā'yel, and our main solace in the fatigues of the road, under my head, pillow-wise, hoping thus to save it from these voracious brutes. Besides, who could have imagined that dogs had a particular fancy for dates and old leather? Vain precautions! delusive hopes! About midnight I was awakened by a sharp snarl close at my ear, and found my head reclining on the sand while the bag with its contents had been dragged away, and was now lying in the midst of a canine circle, who were proving that their species can relish a vegetable diet no less than cattle or horses. But though I felt little desire to recover what had become the leavings of dogs, I could not omit an opportunity for just revenge; so calling to mind the Marston Moor password of "firing low," I hurled a large stick on the most correct Cromwellian principles of marksmanship against the four-legged thieves, and had the satisfaction of seeing a huge black brute limp off, yelping like mad and holding his damaged paw in the air. The rest followed and left the coast clear; then after awhile returned, carried their booty farther off, and finished it at leisure.

This was the 14th of September, and we had left Kowārah behind, journeying on till near midday, when, after passing a few low hills, we came to a sudden dip in the land level, and the extent of Southern Ḳaseem burst on our view.

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Now, for the first time, we could in some measure appreciate the strength of the Wahhabee in his mastery over such a land. Before us to the utmost horizon stretched an immense plain, studded with towns and villages, towers and groves, all steeped in the dazzling noon, and announcing everywhere life, opulence, and activity. The average breadth of this populous district is about sixty miles, its length twice as much, or more; it lies full two hundred feet below the level of the uplands, which here break off like a wall and leave the lower ground to stretch uninterrupted far away to the long transverse chain of Ṭoweyḳ that bounds it to the south and separates it from the high road leading from Nejed to Mecca; for the main opening of Ḳaseem itself is to the north of that mountain, towards Medinah. Fifty or more good-sized villages and four or five large towns form the commercial and agricultural centres of the province, and its surface is moreover thick strewn with smaller hamlets, isolated wells and gardens, and traversed by a network of tracks in every direction. Here begin and hence extend to Djebel Ṭoweyḳ itself the series of high watch-towers that afford the inhabitants a means, denied otherwise by their level flats, of discerning from afar the approach of foray or invasion, and thus preparing for resistance. For while no part of Central Arabia has an older or a better established title to civilization and wealth, no part also has been the starting point and theatre of so many wars, or witnessed the gathering of such numerous armies. Here, and our companions pointed out the spot, were the too-famous hunting grounds of Koleyb Wā'il, his New Forest, that gave occasion to the fatal war of Basoos, which for forty years decimated the clans of Ṭaghleb and Bikr. Here, too, in later times ruled the powerful and tyrannical Dārim, exaggerated by tradition into a giant and darkened into a magician, but in reality a vigorous though haughty chief, who in the declining years of the Bagdad caliphate shook off the last feeble bonds of Islam and the Abbasides, and reasserted the primal independence of Ḳaseem.

But isolated events can hardly be understood unless we have a correct idea of the condition of Arabia in general during the period that elapsed between the rise of Islam and the Wahhabee

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outbreak, a period comprising eleven centuries, during which this country underwent great changes and revolutions, though I do not remember having met with a distinct account or explanation of them in the Oriental histories of any European writer. We possess, indeed, many and complete chronicles of what took place in the great branches of the so-called Arab empire, in Egypt, Syria, Africa, Spain, Bagdad, and Sicily, but of Arabia and its denizens, the fountain-head of that mighty stream whose divided currents overflowed so large a portion of the globe, little or nothing is recorded. My readers will not, I trust, grudge the delay, if I here make a short pause in the present narrative, and attempt to fill up this historical blank to the best of my means. Whence my data are derived, and on whose warrant they rest, I have explained at the commencement of this volume, and there my readers will find a catalogue of the Arab authors whom I have had leisure or opportunity to consult on this and analogous subjects.

When Mahomet and his companions in Ḥejāz first planned the conquest of the entire Peninsula, and its amalgamation under one law, religion, and dominion, it was divided between four governments, widely differing in strength and tendencies. To the north-west the Byzantine empire had extended its sway by means of the Ghassanides and their allies over a large section of the country, and imperial soldiery held their posts at no great distance from Medinah. On the north-east the kings of Ḥira' reigned from the shores of the lower Euphrates and the great Shaṭṭ all down the Persian Gulf, and inland to the very limits of Nejed proper. Southward the Yemanite dynasty, restored by Seyf Yezen, but tributary, like that of Ḥira', to the Persian despot, possessed a large and important territory, of which 'Omān itself was a viceroyalty and appendage. In the centre the restless clans of Nejed were grouped together around Moseylemah the Liar (for thus was he named by his more successful rival in falsehood, Mahomet), and of this powerful confederacy Ḳaseem formed a part. Besides these four main groups, scattered over the Peninsula, but especially to the west, existed several small but energetic Jewish communities, in possession of independent strongholds and fortresses, among which the castle of Kheybar and the Ablaḳ of Teyma, have obtained a lasting celebrity.

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The Bedouin tribes, emancipated by the great revolt which a hundred years before had rent Central and Northern Arabia from the Yemanite domination, had also everywhere attained considerable importance, the result of anarchy around, and their barbarous and predatory ways did much to aggravate the prevailing confusion.

How the Greeks were vanquished, and their influence for ever banished from Arabia; how the inhabitants of Yemen incorporated themselves into the Ḥejāz empire almost without striking a blow; how the kings of Ḥira' and their power melted like snow before the burning fanaticism of the early Mahometans; how the Jews lost fort after fort, till their whole nationality was, with few exceptions, blotted out or driven beyond the frontiers, has been often related by historians and biographers, though somewhat confusedly, and without satisfactory distinction of causes and effects. But in Central Arabia the work of conquest was slow and bloody, and the incorporation of the vanquished temporary and imperfect.

Ḳaseem, the near neighbour of Ḥejāz, and united to it by commercial interest, was the first province to separate itself from the common cause of Nejed; and its troops joined with the army of Khālid, the Sword of the Faith and of Mahomet, when that energetic warrior concentrated the whole force of Islam on the decisive struggle with Moseylemah. After the tremendous carnage, whose memorials still abound in the valley of Ḥaneefah, the death of the ill-fated prophet, the dispersion of his sect, and the submission of all the uplands and valleys of Ṭoweyḳ, no further enemy appeared to dispute with Islam the sovereignty of Arabia. From the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the long Red Sea coast, the whole Peninsula appeared united in one empire and one faith. Yet a discerning eye could even then have foreseen the brief duration and ultimate dissolution of this seeming unity.

Between the Nejdeans and the natives of Ḥejāz had from time immemorial rankled an antipathy, the common theme of verse and prose on either side; its first origin lay in the great, I had almost said the utter, dissimilarity of character between the rival races. The Nejdean, patient, cool, slow in preparing

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his means of action, more tenacious than any bulldog when he has once laid hold, attached to his ancestral usages and native land by a patriotism rare in the East, impatient in the highest degree of foreign rule, sober almost to austerity in his mode of life, averse to the luxury and display of foreign nations, nay, stranger still, to their very vices, sympathizes but ill with the volatile and light-minded Ḥejāzee, who begins vigorously, but soon tires and turns away, a lover of ornament and magnificence, willingly adopting the customs and the dissoluteness too of his neighbours, ostentatious, talkative, and inconsiderate. Indeed, the two characters are scarcely less opposed to each other than are the German and French in the West. Arab poetry has often described and Arab history confirms the antithesis existing between Nejed and Ḥejāz; but my own observation, unaided by books, might have sufficed me to draw these portraits, summed up in the well-known verses of a native poet: "Nejed is the land of great souls, and the rest are dwarfs in comparison; but for the men of Ḥejāz, they are all at short tether."

Political events, at once the effect and the cause of national character, had moreover contributed to deepen the line of demarcation, and embittered dislike and antipathy into downright hatred. In the great war of A.D. 500 to 520, Nejed, under Koleyb Wā'il, had seen herself mistress of Arabia, and the supremacy then attained had remained hers for more than a century. This had now been wrested from her by her old rival, the Ḥejāz, and wrested in a conflict that had made her valleys flow with blood, and had covered her hills with corpses. A large debt of revenge had thus been added to former grudges; and the Nejdeans only awaited a moment of weakness in the power that had quelled them to throw off its yoke from their necks.

Meanwhile 'Omān and the provinces bordering on the Persian Gulf were also little disposed to persevere in a union, whether political or religious, with Mecca and its children. The Ḳaḥṭanite Arab has—how, we shall more fully examine afterwards—hardly anything in common, language excepted, with the Ismaelitic branch of that great family; his character and institutions are all apart; and, moreover, Sabean worship, not without a strong tincture of Persianism, had fixed too deep a root by far in these

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easterly regions to be at once eradicated by a simple "la Ilāh illa Allāh," and a transient acquiescence, more from prudence than conviction, in the questionable mission of the Meccan prophet. Here then, also, though on motives somewhat different from those which prevailed in Nejed, and on another line of action, all was ready for disunion and ultimate hostility.

Thus was it with the centre and east; the rest of Arabia had, with few and unimportant exceptions, already learnt to look on Islam as a national religion, and on Mecca as a political and ceremonial centre. In saying this, however, I do not mean to include the Bedouins, of whom Mahomet himself, by his own avowal in the Coran, could make almost nothing, and who continued throughout much the same, whether before, under, or after the Mahometan conquest. Beings unstable as water, and like that element incapable of permanent impression from their very instability.

During the reigns of Aboo Bekr and 'Omar the first vigour of a new empire kept down, and the glories of conquest concealed, these germs of discontent and separation. But the feebleness of 'Othmān and the sanguinary conflicts that convulsed the caliphate of Alee gave them an early opportunity of displaying themselves.

No sooner, in fact, had the rulers of Islam turned their swords against each other, than 'Omān, with its neighbouring provinces, fell off from their dominion, never to return. Nejed rose in arms, and siding to a man with the men of Coufa and with 'Alee, avenged themselves on their old enemies of Ḥejāz, now headed by Ma'owiyah and his partisans. But the period of anarchy, though violent, was short, and was soon followed by the triumph of Benoo 'Ommey'yah, and the establishment of the Damascene caliphate. Its first years were characterized by great vigour, and the close communication yet existing between Syria and Arabia compelled Nejed, with the rest of the centre, west, and north, to acknowledge once more the supremacy of the Rulers of the Faithful. Yet even then, scarce twenty years after the death of Ma'owiyah, Djebel Shomer and its allied clans broke out into open revolt, and the dreaded Ḥejjaj, victorious everywhere else, dared not lead his armies to the assault of those thickly-peopled mountains, where the

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troops of his lieutenant Omey'yah, great-grandson of 'Othmān, had recently strewed the gorges with their dead. However, the inhabitants of Shomer, content with their first victory, and unwilling to provoke a war which might end in extermination, offered a voluntary though a merely nominal submission to 'Abd-el-Melek, then Caliph of Damascus, and Arabia was once more pacified and united, or at least seemed so, for two-thirds of its extent. But 'Omān and the south-east had been completely detached, and took no part in the new consolidation.

Matters thus continued with little change for about fifty years more, till the downfall of the Damascene dynasty, and the transfer of the caliphate, first to the shores of the Euphrates, A.D. 750, and ultimately to those of the Tigris at Bagdad in 770, prepared the way for the total and lasting separation of Arabia from the great centres of Mahometan government.

Topographical distance in a land where carriage-roads and railroads are equally unknown cannot but have a dissevering effect. But to this other and no less important moral causes were soon added. True, for the first century of Abbaside rule the Arab extraction of the Caliphs, their conformity to Arab usages and modes of life, their large-minded and popular system of government, their liberality and easiness of access, continued to attach the mass of their fellow-countrymen to their sceptre. The government of 'Abd-Allah-es-Seffah, of Dja'afar, of Mahdee, and the rest, down to the reign of Haroon-er-Rasheed and his successors, was eminently Arab, and accordingly history and tradition record no rebellious outbreak of any importance during their sway among the numerous vicegerencies of Arabia.

But with Haroon-er-Rasheed began a change which progressively modified and deteriorated the whole character of the Bagdad caliphate, and for ever estranged from it its Arab subjects. Persian customs and manners were rapidly infiltrating into the great Court, and infecting every branch of the administration with their unhealthy influence. The liberality and affability of the early Caliphs was exchanged for the ceremonious seclusion, the haughty inaccessibility, and the negligent indolence of an Achæmenian palace, and the Arab on coming to Bagdad now found himself no less a foreigner

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there, insolently despised and trampled on, than he had ever been of old times at Shirāz or Ispahan. The strange fluctuations of religion and doctrine that carried Bagdad and its Caliphs into opposite and extravagant directions, tended also to snap the last links of hereditary respect that yet bound the Arab nation to the family of Hāshem and the creed of Islam. The great separation commenced, and was henceforth irretrievable.

The first outbreak and the signal for all the rest was conducted by the Carmathian chief, Aboo Ṭāhir, whose fortress and gorgeous palace I have myself visited at Ḳaṭeef on the Persian Gulf. Others have written the history of the Carmathian sect and its tenets, its rise and progress, and I myself have something to add on that score when we reach the land of their birthplace. For the moment, I will only say that long before Ṭāhir had been acknowledged for their leader, these dangerous factionaries had disseminated themselves from the eastern shore of Arabia far into the interior, and even reached the valleys of Yemen, while Ḥaṣa, 'Omān, and whatever adjoins them were entirely in their hands. In Ṭāhir they found a captain alike daring and successful. From the coast of Ḥaṣa to the Red Sea his armies overran the whole Peninsula, uprooting, slaying, disorganizing, annihilating everywhere. And when after thirty years of bloodshed the first fury of the Carmathians had subsided, and the wild flood-tide ebbed back to its original limits, it scarce left behind it a ruin to mark where the empire of the Caliphs had been throughout Northern and Central Arabia.

The provinces of the Persian Gulf, the entire Nejed, and all its appendages of Shomer, Ḳaseem, Teyma, Djowf, and the lands around had been rent away, and never returned to the enfeebled rulers of the north. Left in headless anarchy, each district now grouped itself around its own chiefs and nobles, to pass henceforward centuries of feud and rivalry, in all the liberty of misrule, not unmixed with intervals of vigour and of brilliant though transient prosperity. How it fared more particularly with Djowf and Shomer, we have already related, and the subsequent pages will throw some light on the obscure history of Nejed and Ḳaseem. The landward

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provinces of Yemen, Nejrān and Khowlān, together with 'Aaseer, had sympathized with the Carmathians, and taken part with their success. They now became places of refuge for thousands of these sectaries, and strongholds that for centuries eluded or defied all foreign assaults. The sea-coast of Yemen, too, with Sanaa', returned to its national independence, but the comparatively pacific character of its inhabitants led them awhile to keep up a nominal allegiance, now to the Caliph of Egypt and now to him of Bagdad, the more so because, being sincerely and thoroughly Mahometans, they regarded division from the great politico-religious centres of Islam as an evil and a sin. On the contrary, 'Omān, with a large part of Ḥaḍramaut to the south, and Ḳaṭar and Baḥreyn on the north, gladly took occasion of the Carmathian alliance to secure themselves against the ravages of war, and as a new guarantee of permanent independence.

Nothing but the yearly pilgrimage preserved for the Caliphs a shadow of disputed authority over Ḥejāz and the territory of Mecca; and an occasional interference with the chiefs of Yemen or Kheybar, whenever these latter thought fit to submit their rival pretensions to foreign arbitration.

Years and centuries rolled away; the horses of Hoolagoo trampled under hoof the last Caliph of Bagdad; Turks and Turcomans, Curdes and Memlooks founded ephemeral kingdoms, with dynasties of pompous title, all blood-sprung, blood-nourished, and soon extinguished in blood; Crusaders from the West and Tartars from the East slaughtered and were slaughtered on the coast of Syria or by the banks of the Nile and the Euphrates; but in nothing of all this had Arabia any share, not a ripple of all these counter-currents crossed the bar now heaped up and impassable at her desert entrance. Last, the Ottoman armies reached her very limits, and Syria and Egypt became pashalics of Constantinople. Yet on the Arabian soil, the pilgrim road from Ma'ān to Mecca, and a few unimportant outposts or ports, were all that the Turk ever inherited or mastered for his own from the days of Seleem at the commencement of the sixteenth century down to 'Abd-el-'Azeez in our own.

The neighbourhood of Egypt, separated by a narrow sea-

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strip only from the Arabian coast, has indeed more than once given rise to foreign influence or invasion, but very superficial for the most and of short duration. Thus the Memlooks have now and then by their "decision more embroiled the fray" of the western Arab chiefs, and at a later date we have seen Egypt for a brief period mistress of Nejed itself, and placing governors in the towns on the shores of the Persian Gulf. But this too speedily ebbed away, and the rock still stands where it did before the high tide, nor shows a trace of the water-mark.

But Arabia, thus abandoned to herself and disintegrating into a confused mass of little principalities and local interests, continued throughout to maintain in her bosom the same great demarcations that she had presented before the rise of Islam, and even with no material change. Founded in diversity of race, and fostered by dissimilarity of social development, such demarcations are not only of their own nature indelible, but are also likely to become then most apparent when left to their proper and undisturbed action by the removal of external pressure. The boundary lines of the kingdom of 'Omān, of Nejed, of Yemen, of Shomer and of Ḥejāz, indicated on the map at the commencement of this volume, are scarcely more political than ethnographical, and being such must always subsist, at least in tendency and often in fact, with slender modification. Certain anomalies may, it is true, occur. Thus, Ḥaṣa and Ḳaseem, nearer allied by race, the one with 'Omān, the other with Shomer, than either with Nejed, have yet for some years past become incorporated with the latter, owing to superior strength and the events of war. The entire separation between Yemen and 'Omān, as they now stand, in spite of the kindred descent of their inhabitants, is another. But to these three exceptions, readily explained by circumstances, I doubt whether a fourth could be added throughout the Arabian Peninsula of modern times.

Meanwhile, life and movement, the sure accompaniment, if not the essence, of life, went on, and Arab energy, though bounded in its range, was not the less vigorous wherever it found an outlet. International trade, and all that follows trade—art, elegance, and wealth—attained considerable perfection in many parts of the country, especially in the centre and east, while at

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their destined intervals arose those remarkable men who impose opinion or enforce rule over neighbouring and rival states, till the district that witnessed their origin swells into a province, and the province into an empire. Of one such, namely, Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed, we have already traced the history; of Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb, founder of the Wahhabee sect, and his martial co-operator Sa'ood-ebn-Sa'ood, we shall afterwards give detailed information; others, too, remain for particular notice, each in his place. But he who now concerns us nearest at this period of our journey is Dārim, the hero of mediæval Ḳaseem.

He seems—for the inaccuracy of unassisted Arab chronology will not permit expressions of greater certainty—to have flourished between the fourth and fifth centuries of Islam, that is, near the eleventh of our era. Born at the Rass, of an ancient and noble family, now wholly extinct, he became, while yet young, absolute master of his own town, and was not long in adding the rest of Ḳaseem to the more limited heritage of his ancestors. His government was arbitrary, of course, yet popular; and the fortifications of 'Oneyzah, attributed to him, prove that a desire of strengthening his own native town did not hinder him from bestowing his attention on the safety and well-being of the province in general, which is said in his days to have reached the high pitch of commercial prosperity that it long retained. But Ḳaseem was too narrow for the ambition of Dārim; he attacked Nejed, and reduced the greater part of it to submission, then turned his arms against Yemen, defeated her chiefs in the valley of Nejrān, and ultimately fixed the southerly limits of his empire at Wadi Seleyyel and Ḳela'at Bisha'. This empire, for such it was, he left to his children, and by them it was maintained for several generations, through a period equivalent, so far as I can approach to a computation of dates, to about three hundred years. Certainly during that time the sovereignty of Central Arabia lay in Ḳaseem, nor could I discover that it had been exercised by any others than the Ebn-Dārims, from father to son, like the Ebn-Rasheeds and Ebn-Sa'oods of later date. At last the growing power of the chiefs of 'Aared and Yemāmah excluded the lords of Ḳaseem from the limits of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, and their domain dwindled by degrees to a provincial, and lastly to a merely local, pre-eminence, till the Wahhabee torrent swept them finally and for ever away.

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Correlatively with the rule of Dārim and his race, the old forms of Arab superstition, and especially of planetary worship, reappeared in Ḳaseem, nor was Mahometanism again established there till the Wahhabee epoch. I say the old forms of Arab superstition, for idolatry, properly speaking, was never extensively practised in Arabia, and even where it did exist was far from assuming those grosser forms too common among the Greeks and Romans, and even now to be witnessed among the nations of Hindoostan. Arab idol-worship of a subordinate character, and simple enough in its emblems, was almost exclusively confined to the Western Provinces; in the interior and beyond the limits of Ḥejāz and Yemen it was nearly unknown; while the religious practices of the interior, however misdirected, were remarkable for the absence of representative symbolism and sculptural imagery.

Negative facts are best established by negative proofs, and of these we have on this point a very strong one within the Coran itself. This book, where every species of popular superstition or misbelief known to the author is not only distinctly recorded, but even exaggerated with all the acrimony of polemical eloquence, makes absolutely no mention soever of idols or idolaters in the true sense of the term, except in narratives relating to bygone ages and mythical races. For his cotemporaries, Mahomet does indeed accuse them "of associating" subordinate powers with the Supreme Ruler; but that very "association" had in the mind of the writer a meaning far too comprehensive to be restricted to paganism or idolatry in our sense of the term; even Lāt, 'Ozzah, and Minah, the demigods of Ḳoreysh, and the stones that bore their names, were very different, both in themselves and in the honours paid them, from the Pallas of the Parthenon, or the Meenakshee of Madura. Much less were the "Ansab" and "Azlam," so energetically reprobated by the Prophet, idols,—being mere symbols and instruments of a superstitious principle, like the *lituus* of the augur or the tripod of Delphi. Real image-worship, had it existed, could hardly have passed unnoticed in the vehement declamations of the Arabian Knox, so fierce in his condemnation of much less glaring offences.

A general belief in one Supreme Being, Author of all and Ruler of all, has from time immemorial prevailed throughout

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Arabia. Authors of some note have supposed that the Arabs derived this dogma from foreign sources, Jewish or other; but this is, in my opinion, an error, and the arguments adduced in its support have too limited an application to bear out a similar theory for at least three-fourths of the Peninsula. Records of undoubted authenticity in the main, at any rate the only records that we possess, represent Monotheism as having been the religion of the Arabs from the very first ages, and it survived all collateral and debasing influences. But the great dogma had been somewhat obscured, and even occasionally thrown into the background, by two different tendencies; one, the credit given to astral and planetary powers, a very old superstition and widely diffused in the East; the other, a grosser fetichism, prevalent for the most part among the lower and less cultivated classes. The early date of the former in Arabia is evidenced by the name of 'Abd-esh-Shems, "servant of the sun," the fourth in succession of the Yemanite kings; by the honours paid to Zahra', the morning star, and by the testimony of the Coran itself. The frequency of the latter is established by its hereditary practices still observed throughout the Peninsula, covertly in the Wahhabee territory, openly elsewhere, not to mention written records on the subject, and local tradition of immemorial antiquity.

Both these adulterations of the older and purer faith existed in Ḳaseem, but to Dārim is ascribed the official restoration of planetary or Sabean worship. Nor is the fact unlikely, considering that his reign determined and coincided with the total emancipation of this region from Islamitic rule. We had now at this point of our journey the good fortune to witness a singular and ancient memorial of this very form of religious feeling or aberration.

We had halted for a moment on the verge of the uplands to enjoy the magnificent prospect before us. Below lay the wide plain; at a few miles' distance we saw the thick palm-groves of 'Eyoon, and what little of its towers and citadel the dense foliage permitted to the eye. Far off on our right, that is, to the west, a large dark patch marked the tillage and plantations which girdle the town of Rass; other villages and hamlets too were thickly scattered over the landscape. All along the ridge where

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we stood, and visible at various distances down the level, rose the tall circular watch-towers of Ḳaseem. But immediately before us stood a more remarkable monument, one that fixed the attention and wonder even of our Arab companions themselves.

For hardly had we descended the narrow path where it winds from ledge to ledge down to the bottom, when we saw before us several huge stones, like enormous boulders, placed endways perpendicularly on the soil, while some of them yet upheld similar masses laid transversely over their summit. They were arranged in a curve, once forming part, it would appear, of a large circle, and many other like fragments lay rolled on the ground at a moderate distance; the number of those still upright was, to speak by memory, eight or nine. Two, at about ten or twelve feet apart one from the other, and resembling huge gate-posts, yet bore their horizontal lintel, a long block laid across them; a few were deprived of their upper traverse, the rest supported each its head-piece in defiance of time and of the more destructive efforts of man. So nicely balanced did one of these cross-bars appear, that in hope it might prove a rocking-stone, I guided my camel right under it, and then stretching up my riding-stick at arm's-length could just manage to touch and push it, but it did not stir. Meanwhile the respective heights of camel, rider, and stick taken together would place the stone in question full fifteen feet from the ground.

These blocks seem, by their quality, to have been hewed from the neighbouring limestone cliff, and roughly shaped, but present no further trace of art, no groove or cavity of sacrificial import, much less anything intended for figure or ornament. The people of the country attribute their erection to Dārim, and by his own hands, too, seeing that he was a giant; perhaps, also, for some magical ceremony, since he was a magician. Pointing towards Rass, our companions affirmed that a second and similar stone circle, also of gigantic dimensions, existed there; and, lastly, they mentioned a third towards the south-west, that is, in the direction of Ḥenākeeyah on the confines of Ḥejāz.

That the object of these strange constructions was in some measure religious, seems to me hardly doubtful; and if the

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learned conjectures that would discover a planetary symbolism in Stonehenge and Carnac have any real foundation, this Arabian monument, erected in a land where the heavenly bodies are known to have been once venerated by the inhabitants, may make a like claim; in fact, there is little difference between the stone-wonder of Ḳaseem and that of Somersetshire, except that the one is in Arabia, the other, though the more perfect, in England.

It was now the hour of highest noon. Our band halted in the shade of these huge pillars to rest after the fatigue of a long march, and tell mythic fables of Dārim and his achievements, while Foleyḥ graciously invited the whole party, great and small, to supper at his dwelling in the neighbouring town of 'Eyoon. Needs not say that the invitation was gladly accepted; and our future host, with his two companions, set off at once for the town, yet nearly two hours distant, to precede and prepare for the rest of the company, whilst we moved a little farther on, and took up temporary quarters and repose in the shade of a fruit-laden palm-grove near at hand by the side of a well, there to drink fresh water, and wait till the heat of the day should pass and the time come for pursuing our route to 'Eyoon. While we thus pause, and, by the gardener's permission, pick up ripe dates where they lie strewn by the water-channel's edge, a few words on the natural history and general character of the country around may not be ill-timed: they will serve for an introduction to a land no less new to my readers, perhaps, than it was to ourselves.

The Arabic word "Ḳaseem" denotes a sandy but fruitful ground. Such is, in fact, the leading idea of this province. The soil, red or yellow, appears indeed at first sight of little promise. Yet, unlike most things, it is better than it seems, and wherever irrigation reaches it bears a copious and varied vegetation. Fortunately water is here to be met with everywhere, and at very little depth below the surface; six feet or thereabouts was the farthest measure that I witnessed in any well of Ḳaseem from the curb-stone to the water-line, often it was much less. Mine was an autumn experience, when moisture is at its minimum in this climate, but in winter I was told that the wells fill to overflowing, and give rise to small

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lakes, some of which, though of course much shrunken in dimensions, outlast the summer, and even find their place in maps, though undeserving of the honour. The prevailing aspect of the land is level, but capricious-seeming. Sand-hills and slopes of fifty or sixty feet in height are not uncommon. These slopes are for the most part clothed with little climbing copses of Ithel and Ghaḍa, while the broad-leaved Khurṭa, a plant much employed here in tanning, the thorny Ḳaṭād, much loved by camels, a species of Tey'oon, as they call it, a tall herb with many stems and a lanceolate leaf, somewhat like verbena in shape and smell, abound in the lower regions.

Here, as in most parts of Arabia, the staple article of cultivation is the date-palm. Of this tree there are, however, many widely-differing species, and Ḳaseem can boast of containing the best known anywhere, the Khalaṣ of Ḥaṣa, of which more hereafter, alone excepted. The ripening season coincides with the latter half of August and the first of September, and we had thus an ample opportunity for testing the produce. Those who, like most Europeans at home, only know the date from the dried specimens of that fruit shown beneath a label in shop-windows, can hardly imagine how delicious it is when eaten fresh and in Central Arabia. Nor is it when newly-gathered heating, a defect inherent to the preserved fruit everywhere; nor does its richness, however great, bring satiety: in short, it is an article of food alike pleasant and healthy. Its cheapness in its native land might astonish a Londoner. Enough of the very best dates from the Bereydah gardens to fill a large Arab handkerchief, about fifteen inches each way, almost to bursting, cost Barakāt and myself the moderate sum of three farthings. We hung it up from the roof-beam of our apartment to preserve the luscious fruit from the ants, and it continued to drip molten sweetness into a sugary pool on the floor below for three days together, before we had demolished the contents, though it figured at every dinner and supper during that period.

Date-trees are in consequence the main source of landed Arab wealth, and a small cluster of palms is often the entire maintenance of a poor townsman or villager. The fruit partly serves him and his household for aliment, in which it holds about the same proportion that bread does in France or

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Germany; the rest, often in large quantities, is exported to Yemen and Ḥejāz, in this respect less favoured by nature. To cut down the date-trees of an enemy is a great achievement in time of war, to plant with them a new piece of ground the first sign of increasing prosperity. Mahometans seldom fail to assert and to believe, that this tree can only be found in the lands where Islam is professed, a blessing, in short, never wanting to the "faithful," but reserved to them alone. Were such indeed the case, many a fine plantation in Ḥaṣa and 'Omān, not to mention some districts of Shomer, would be condemned to wither. But He who makes His sun to rise alike on the just and unjust, does not seem to have reserved the date-tree for a special exception to that general beneficence; nor, on the other hand, have palm-groves sprung up in any great abundance under the walls of Constantinople since Islam was first established there in the days of Mahomet II.

All this is childish enough, yet worth mentioning for the analogy it bears to the surmises elsewhere at times indulged in on occasion of a good or bad year, an earthquake, a fire, the practice of vaccination, and so forth.

Fruit trees of various kinds, generally resembling those of Shomer, but more productive, are here also met with. Cornfields, maize, millet, vetches, and the like, surround the villages, and afford a copious harvest, besides melons and pot-herbs. But the extent of cultivation and tillage is limited by the necessity of artificial irrigation.

Another produce of Ḳaseem, and it was like an old friend to me after so many years of absence from India, is the cotton-shrub, identical in species with that cultivated in Guzerat and Cutch. The inhabitants are well acquainted with its use, but the quantity grown is too slender to serve for foreign exportation. Under more propitious circumstances it might add much to the wealth of the country, for the climate and soil concur to give the plant sufficient vigour, and its crop is not less copious here than in India, nor did the quality seem to me anyhow inferior.

Here also, for the first time, I met with a narcotic plant very common farther south, and gifted with curious qualities. Its seeds, in which the deleterious principle seems chiefly to reside, when pounded and administered in a small dose, produce effects

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much like those ascribed to Sir Humphry Davy's laughing gas; the patient dances, sings, and performs a thousand extravagances, till after an hour of great excitement to himself and amusement to the bystanders, he falls asleep, and on awaking has lost all memory of what he did or said while under the influence of the drug. To put a pinch of this powder into the coffee of some unsuspecting individual is a not uncommon joke, nor did I hear that it was ever followed by serious consequences, though an over-quantity might perhaps be dangerous. I myself tried it on two individuals, but in proportions, if not absolutely homœopathic, still sufficiently minute to keep on the safe side of risk, and witnessed its operation, laughable enough, but very harmless. The plant that bears these berries hardly attains in Ḳaseem the height of six inches above the ground, but in 'Omān I have seen bushes of it three or four feet in growth, and wide-spreading. The stems are woody, and of a yellow tinge when barked; the leaf of a dark-green colour and pinnated, with about twenty leaflets on either side; the stalks smooth and shining; the flowers are yellow, and grow in tufts, the anthers numerous; the fruit is a capsule, stuffed with a greenish padding, in which lie embedded two or three black seeds, in size and shape much like French beans; their taste sweetish, but with a peculiar opiate flavour; the smell heavy and almost sickly. While at Ṣohar in 'Omān, where this plant abounds, I collected some specimens intended for botanical recognition at home, but they with much else were lost in my subsequent shipwreck, nor did I again meet with this curiosity for the rest of my journey, then, indeed, near its end.

Stramonium Datura, or thorn-apple, is not uncommon, and its properties are well known, not for medicine, but for poison and quackery. But I vainly looked for the Indian hemp or ḥasheesh plant, nor did any one appear acquainted with it or its use, whereat I much wondered. Coffee does not grow here; it is imported from Yemen, sometimes by the direct road of Wadi Nejrān, more commonly through Mecca. Articles of Egyptian and of European manufacture are also brought hither from Mecca and Djiddah; and the phosphorized amadou boxes of Pollak, from Vienna, after passing through the sacred cities of Arabia, are to

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be met with in the shops of Bereydah and 'Oneyzah. An important branch of commerce was once carried on with Damascus, but of late years and under Wahhabee rule it has ceased to exist. The route northward from Ḳaseem to Syria does not pass by Djebel Shomer, but follows a straighter and easier line through Kheybar, and thence up the ordinary pilgrim-way.

Much regarding the character of the inhabitants may be collected from what I have already said; in physical endowments and stature they are somewhat inferior to the men of Shomer, and in certain respects to the inhabitants of Upper Nejed, but they surpass either in commercial and industrial talents; they present, also, much of the gay and cheerful spirit of the former, with not a little of the pertinacity and clannishness of the latter. But to these qualities the inhabitants of Ḳaseem add a dash of the cunning and restlessness of their Ḥejāz neighbours, with whom they have a slight degree of outward conformity, besides a share, though barely perceptible at first sight, of that selfish egotism which stamps the caste of Mecca and Medinah, even more than that of Tennyson's "Vere de Vere." But in spite of these unfavourable points, the Shomer type predominates decidedly in Ḳaseem, and the population in general offers good elements capable of being worked out into better things than can be hoped for under the present administration.

In religion, their long-continued intercourse with Mecca has given them a tinge of modern Islamism, vainly sought for in any other of the central provinces. The assimilating process had commenced before the Wahhabee era, and probably dates from the decline of the house of Dārim, and the separation of Ḳaseem from Nejed, about two centuries ago. At that epoch Mecca and her territory seem to have regained some of their old predominance, and accumulated the wealth which a hundred years later served for booty to lade the camels of Ebn-Sa'ood. Accordingly in Ḳaseem, and in Ḳaseem alone, we see mosques of a date anterior to the end of the last century or the beginning of this, adorned, too, with minarets, contrary to Wahhabee usage, while an hereditary store of Coranic or traditional lore, giving a very peculiar and unmistakable tone to the conversation and manners, not to mention public teaching and exhortation, may be noticed among the more learned and serious

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classes. This might be expected from the intimate territorial and commercial connexions of Ḳaseem with the great centres of Mahometan religious action. To the same proximity, local or influential, we may safely ascribe the very low standard of morality existing throughout the province, lower by much than in the rest of Central Arabia, since gross vice is more frequent here than in Shomer, and less covert than in Sedeyr and 'Aared. The appalling profligacy of the Meccan citizens, high and low, (I speak from certain knowledge,) is in fact sufficient to corrupt steadier principled neighbours than the men of Ḳaseem, and many a visitor of the Ca'abah may too justly apply to himself the words of the Arabian Ovid, 'Omar-ebn-Abee-Rabee'ah, on his return from Mecca,—

> I set out in hopes of lightening the burden of my sins,
> And returned bringing with me a fresh load of transgressions.

But this is a subject which merits to be examined at leisure, and I accordingly reserve its fuller discussion for our month's halt at the Wahhabee capital.

The sun was already declining when we quitted our palm-grove for the path leading to the town of 'Eyoon, where in the meantime Foleyḥ had been killing his lambs and cooking his rice for our entertainment; and considering that he had nearly thirty famished guests to provide for, we could not in common fairness but allow him a reasonable interval for preparation. Moreover the number of our party was now augmented by four beings of an entirely new order. These were travelling Darweeshes, two natives of Cabul, a third from Bokhara, and the fourth a Beloochee, who had taken the route through Central Arabia on their return from Mecca to their own respective countries in the East, and here their path fell in with and awhile coincided with our own. One of them, the Beloochee, was an elderly man, of fifty or sixty, to judge by his white beard and wrinkled features, thin, tall, and hardly knowing a word of Arabic; his three companions were younger and stouter; all however bore evident marks of the long hardships and great fatigue of their protracted journey made entirely on foot, in such a climate and over such roads. Those from Cabul and Bokhara declared that before they could hope to regain their native hearths their pilgrimage would have lasted

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nearly two years, nor could it well take less after their manner of travelling. They all wore the peculiar costume of their profession and country—the high wool cap, the large upper robe, loose trowsers, and a wrapper cast across the shoulders.

They professed themselves, and I really believe them to have been, Sonnee Mahometans, though this point did not admit of absolute certainty, since many Shiya'ees from the same regions assume Sonnee appearance and badges, in order thus to ensure for themselves a better reception in their journey through the countries in which the latter form of Mahometanism prevails, and especially at Mecca. Their sect, real or assumed, was that of Ebn-Ḥaneefah, whose teaching is popularly adopted in Cabul, Balkh, Bokhara, and Beloochistan. These Darweeshes lived on alms begged by the way, and had a very poor and a not undevout appearance.

However, few of our band welcomed their arrival, or were at all anxious to admit them into their company. The Darweesh in inner Arabia is, in every respect, a fish out of water. The Wahhabees in general detest them, and they are scarcely better looked upon by the rest of the Arab population, in that they are in their way of life the embodiment of a religious system commonly regarded with indifference, often with aversion. The new comers were accordingly greeted by our companions with many sarcastic remarks and unfavourable comments; till at last Arab good-nature got the better, and the Darweeshes were admitted to the participation of such advantages and assistance as travellers on the road can mutually afford or receive.

Passing oneself off for a wandering Darweesh, as some European explorers have attempted to do in the East, is for more reasons than one a very bad plan. It is unnecessary to dilate on that moral aspect of the proceeding which will always first strike unsophisticated minds. To feign a religion which the adventurer himself does not believe, to perform with scrupulous exactitude, as of the highest and holiest import, practices which he inwardly ridicules, and which he intends on his return to hold up to the ridicule of others, to turn for weeks and months together the most sacred and awful bearings of man toward his Creator into a deliberate and truthless mummery, not to mention other and yet darker

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touches,—all this seems hardly compatible with the character of a European gentleman, let alone that of a Christian. In saying this, I must distinctly deprecate any thought of allusion to particular cases, with the special circumstances of which, palliative or justificative, I am unacquainted; what I take here is a merely abstract view, without reference to the dangers which may seem to necessitate, or the motives which may be held to warrant, such conduct. But to leave this theoretical ground for fact, a second capital objection to the Darweesh disguise is, that far from facilitating the acquisition of the objects in view of which it may have been adopted, it is even a positive hindrance. "*C'est pis qu'un crime, c'est une bêtise.*" This demands a brief explanation.

The Darweeshes of the East are nowise isolated individuals; they belong to wide-spread and closely-linked associations, classed each and all under the head of some larger and authentic school of doctrine and usage,—the Refaa'yee, the Ḳāderee, the Bekree, the Shāḍelee, and so forth, known in general by the names of their respective founders. What are the tenets, what the discrepancies of these several schools, I cannot here stop to examine,—a long subject, and already in part treated by Oriental scholars and historians, though much might yet be added. Let it suffice that every school, every brotherhood, has its own distinctive teaching and technicalities, its peculiar practices and observances, its several saints and doctors, great men and founders. A Franciscan or a Carthusian, a Dominican or a Benedictine, are not members of more thoroughly organised bodies, nor more minutely discriminated from each other, than are the disciples of each saint or founder in this Oriental reproduction of Christian asceticism. Now let us imagine to ourselves a Protestant traveller from Edinburgh or Stockholm desirous, from whatever motive, to traverse Italy or Spain unrecognized, and assuming the guise of a Benedictine or a Franciscan, in order better to ensure his incognito in Catholic countries. It is evident that the result would simply be to entangle himself in superfluous difficulties, and double or treble the chances of his own detection. And even should the ordinary crowd, deceived by his garb and tonsure, take him now and then for

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what he acted, what would be his condition on falling in with any of his pretended order? Above all, should any shrewd monk or friar, suspecting, as he certainly would, the stranger brother's authenticity, ply him with a few of those family questions and allusive phrases which constitute, so to speak, the freemasonry of every close corporation! Much better would our imaginary north countryman have gone on his way unfrocked and ungirdled, mixed with the every-day multitude, and on a safer because a simpler line of personation.

In fact, I do not believe that any who are rumoured to have followed this plan in Mahometan countries really passed undiscovered. Some instances of detection, and of detection followed by fatal consequences, are recorded. Others, more lucky, have returned to boast of the impunity with which they had made a jest of Oriental religion, and to publish their imaginary success. But I have strong reason to believe that in no case has the result been exactly what was imagined. Of one or two alleged Darweesh-personifiers, I have heard much from the natives of the very land that was the scene of their fancied incognito, and was assured that they were everywhere recognized, often tricked, and only saved from worse by the prudent politeness and dissembling courtesy of those amongst whom their good luck had cast them. Yet these were described as men of no ordinary address, and long acquainted with the East. And I can hence hardly imagine that others gifted with less aptitude and of more superficial acquirements can have obtained better fortune in their disguise.

My readers may, not unlikely, think it strange that such detection could take place without being immediately followed by absolute exposure, and more too. Yet this is often the case, and it is due to a curious feature in the Eastern character and in the Islamitic mind. The Asiatic Mahometan, even where he has the best reasons for doubt, is designedly unsuspicious with regard to any one who outwardly professes the same faith, and he is so in accordance with a duty enjoined him in the strongest terms by the Coran. "Do not say to one who meets you and salutes you, 'You are not a true believer,'" and "O ye true believers, avoid suspicion, for suspicion is often a crime," are texts known to all, and generally obeyed. The

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saying attributed by tradition to the Prophet, "He who casts on a believer the slur of infidelity is himself an infidel," has the same tendency. Hence it is admitted as a fixed principle among all Mahometans, or almost all, that any one who is circumcised, and says "There is no God but God,' is a legal and authentic Muslim, and has full right to be considered such, and to be treated accordingly with indulgence and respect. Meanwhile his inward belief or unbelief does not change the question; of his thoughts no one has right to take cognizance. "El baṭin l'Illāh," "the interior belongs to God alone," is a maxim admitted by all. And in consequence baptized Mahometans and fancy Darweeshes, even if but flimsy and transparent performers, may enjoy the common benefit of outward conformity, and be taken only for hypocrites or impostors, not treated as criminals in law.

These latter remarks apply more especially to Mecca, the pilgrim road, or other localities of the sea-coast and its neighbourhood. But in the interior of Arabia matters may easily take a less favourable turn. For the indulgence accorded to impostors does not extend to spies, and in the last-mentioned country our supposed actor would be almost inevitably regarded as such, and treated accordingly. Of this a melancholy example has but lately been given, and the bones of an ill-fated European traveller, whitening under seven years of sun and rain in the neighbourhood of Ḍerey'eeyah yet bear witness to the fact.

This unfortunate man, of whose fate I was, it seems, the first to bring the unwelcome tidings to his friends in Europe, having resolved to penetrate into Nejed, had determined on the route leading from the eastern sea-coast to the interior, thus hoping to reach and traverse the Wahhabee provinces. So far all was well, and we shall see by the latter part of this work, where the same line of journey is followed in an inverse sense, that it was really the easiest and the nearest. But in an evil hour he bethought himself of assuming the garb of a Darweesh. Thus accoutred he sailed, so was it reported to me, from the isles of Baḥreyn to the adjoining coast of Ḥaṣa, and proceeded to Hofhoof, where Moḥammed-es-Sedeyree then governed in the name and authority of the Wahhabee monarch Feyṣul,

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While our traveller was at Hofhoof, his conduct, which betrayed the foreigner, and especially a prodigality of expenditure inconsistent with his mendicant character, drew on him first notice and then suspicion. Before many days had elapsed, a courier was despatched by the Sedeyree to Riaḍ, informing Feyṣul of the arrival of a wolf in sheep's, or, more truly, poor fellow! of a sheep in wolf's clothing, within the fences of the Wahhabee fold. With true Arab circumspection Feyṣul sent orders not to annoy or thwart the *soi-disant* Darweesh, and carefully to avoid whatever might lead him to suspect his own detection, but above all to encourage him in his onward journey to the capital.

After three or four weeks the traveller, little suspecting what eyes were on him, left Hofhoof, passed Wadi Farooḳ and the Dahnā to the verge of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, entered Wadi Soley', and at last arrived in delusive security at Riaḍ, where he presented himself, half guest, half mendicant, at the palace gate of Feyṣul.

The chamberlain, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, received him according to custom, and enquired the name and business of the new comer. This latter stated that he was a wandering Darweesh, bound on the Meccan pilgrimage. He was politely invited to coffee and the other tokens of Eastern hospitality, while 'Abd-el-'Azeez went and informed the old spider within that the fly was now safely lodged in the very centre of the cobweb.

The unhappy traveller was enjoying his afternoon repose, in full expectation of passing several days unmolested and even honoured in the Nejdean capital, when word was brought him from the king that "We Wahhabees stand in no need of Darweeshes in our territory; so let the stranger put himself early to-morrow morning on his way for Mecca, where he will assuredly be more at home than we can make him here." This message was accompanied by a small sum of money, equivalent to about nine shillings, the ordinary alms distributed on similar occasions at the royal gate, a camel for riding, and a promise of guides to the next halt.

Resistance was out of the question, and delay equally so. At the appointed hour two of the palace attendants with "their murdered man" set forth westward. Orders had been given to conduct him by the road leading through the ruins of Ḍerey'-

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eeyah, where the fiercest fanatics of the Wahhabee sect yet reside. When the traveller and his Riaḍ guides were in the neighbourhood of the place, the latter gave warning to the villagers, and informed them that under the fictitious appearance of a Darweesh was concealed a European spy. A few minutes later the traveller was lying dead under the palm-trees of Ḍerey'eeyah, with several musket shots through the body. These details I learnt in the localities themselves; and seven years, as I was told on my return to Europe, of silence, unbroken by news or letter from the luckless explorer, make me fear that, in the main, at least, it is "an o'er true tale."

Of another line of conduct, fortunately not uncommon, towards those who may chance to be marked out for suspicion in the Wahhabee provinces, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter,—"Et quorum pars magna fui." But the above tale reveals a third and a very serious inconvenience attached in these lands to the Darweesh "dodge," even should it pass undetected. It is true that in ordinary Mahometan countries a genuine Darweesh, or one believed to be so, will almost always meet with a certain degree of respect, sometimes of veneration, even should the peculiarities of his attire or ways occasionally draw upon him some slight ridicule; his position is in a manner analogous to that of a begging friar in a Catholic country, honoured in spite of a passing smile or a good-humoured though critical jest. But among Wahhabees his condition is totally different: here a Darweesh, Sonnee be he or Shiya'ee, is an object of positive aversion, and passes not only for a heretic, but the very quintessence of heresy and abomination. It is the begging friar with frock and rosary amid a crowd of zealous No-Popery townsmen. "The fool went to the tank to wash his feet and soiled them with mud," says a Tamul proverb, which could hardly have a fitter application.

In a memoir on the Ruins of Nakeb-el-Hejār, communicated by Captain Welsted nearly thirty years since to the London Geographical Society, the sailor-like good sense and honesty of that intrepid officer led him to suggest a better and a safer, if not more honourable method. The profession of a merchant or of a physician is, he justly remarks, the most likely to shelter a traveller from suspicion, and at the same time afford him a

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plausible and respectable pretext for scientific researches, thus enabling him to attain a creditable end without means which I must venture to hold questionable. When I set out on my journey I had not seen the gallant captain's publication. But many months after my return home it fell into my hands, and I was glad to find the very plan which experience no less than education had already induced me to adopt, approved and confirmed by so high an authority.

But before returning to the course of my oft-interrupted narrative, I must complete these hints, not, I trust, wholly unprofitable to Eastern travellers, by noticing a fact curious indeed, yet certain. It is often supposed that the Arabs have an extreme aversion to Christians, as such, and that from this feeling arise the principal dangers or difficulties of the traveller's way in their country. This appears to me a mistake. To be known for a Christian in Arabia (Mecca and its appurtenances excepted in a certain degree and under certain coincidences), occasions no danger, hardly even inconvenience. Where, then, lies the source of peril? for peril there undoubtedly is in an Arabian tour. It consists mainly in the chance of being recognized for a European, or agent of Europeans; and this might probably enough be fatal; and at the best would assuredly cut short the traveller's explorations by a premature and compulsory return to the frontiers, closely watched too on his way. Now, though the qualities of Christian and of European may be in fact united in the wayfarer's person, they are by no means necessarily conjoined in Arab minds, and the risk alluded to is attached to the latter title, not to the former. Hence if the wayfarer can manage to pass muster as an Asiatic, his Christianity will not of itself bring him into any particular jeopardy. Of course he would do well, particularly while in fanatical districts, in some parts of the Wahhabee empire for instance, not to make a parade of his religion before men to whom it is unavoidably distasteful, nor obtrude on the public practices and opinions, laudable indeed, but here out of season. Let him keep his religion to himself, without simulating that of others, and quietly go on his way, sure that no individual of any consequence will be so impolite as to ask him questions about his faith and sect, "Ed-deen l'Illāh," "Religion concerns God alone," is the

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saying and the rule among all Arabs of any pretence to self-respect and polite education. But to any ill-bred fellow who may have the impertinence to enquire into the matter, let him coldly answer, "Kullon lahu medheb," "Every man has his own way of thinking," and he will find, as we did more than once, that the bystanders will unanimously applaud his discretion, and impose silence on his interlocutor.

No one is bound to "wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at;" no, nor his creed neither. There are indeed occasions when open and positive profession of belief becomes a duty, and in time of war a soldier should not lay aside his uniform. But these cases have nothing in common with ordinary every-day life, and seldom occur to a merchant or a doctor journeying amid individuals perfectly indifferent to his belief, so his wares be good and his drugs efficacious. Again, no one is bound to insult gratuitously those around him by words and deeds which he knows to be offensive to them, the more so when no good can reasonably be anticipated from so doing. True, to bow down in the house of Rimmon was an exceptional permission, given under very delicate circumstances, and not perhaps intended for general imitation. But yet more seldom can there be either propriety or advantage in cursing and abusing Rimmon in his own house, with the evident risk of throwing his worshippers into a very unprofitable and perilous hubbub. And though a Wahhabee does not think himself bound to beat or kill a stranger merely because he is a Christian, yet he will be very likely, if not sure, to do both one and the other if he fancies a stranger to be a proselytizer, and this cannot fail to be his first idea should the new-comer set himself in open antagonism to the belief of the land, or make an ostentatious display of his own. To sum up, a Christian and an Englishman may well traverse Arabia, and even Nejed, without being ever obliged to compromise either his religion or his honour; but for this, perfect acquaintance with Eastern customs and with at least one Eastern language, together with much circumspection and guardedness in word and deed, are undeniably required. A serious purpose, a stout heart, a good conscience, and the protection of Him in whose hands are the ends of the earth, will do the rest.

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I do not say that after all no dangers or obstacles may possibly intervene; the clearest sky may be suddenly overcast, and one bad hour rarely fails from among the twenty-four that bring up night and day. Yet taking everything into account, I do not hesitate to affirm that the plan just indicated, the same which we ourselves followed, is assuredly the best plan, perhaps the only, and offers at least a much fairer chance of success than any other.

A concluding remark on this subject, and I have done. I stated that the religion of a given stranger in these countries, though an avowed Christian, will not in itself and of itself compromise either his personal safety or the scope of his journey. Now few in Central Arabia have a clear idea of what Christians are: some suppose them to be simply a peculiar sect of Mahometans, others hold them for infidels; some call them brothers, others stigmatize them as misbelievers. But the common feeling towards them is not unfavourable, except among the strictly Wahhabee population, and even there they are better looked on than Jews, who have a most unfortunate reputation throughout Arabia. Nor is it rare to find among the Wahhabees men of learning and knowledge, as learning and knowledge here go, who, in blissful ignorance of the world elsewhere, seriously believe that the whole universe, with all it contains of men and genii, has long since embraced the Mahometan faith, and consequently regard Christianity with a merely historical aversion, like what a theological professor might feel for the Assyrian or Greek mythology, nor dream that Christians yet exist to be objects of a more present hatred.

Amid this confused twilight of ethnological and religious statistics, my readers will not be surprised to learn that we ourselves were not unfrequently taken for Mahometans, though our neglect of prayer and ablutions proclaimed our laxity; and we were often classed by public opinion with Turks, Curdes, and Albanians, whose negligence in these matters has acquired them an undesirable celebrity even in the very heart of Arabia. My Nejdean friends went a step farther, and made of my blue eyes and chestnut hair an argument for setting me down for a runaway officer of the Ottoman army, who, having committed some great breach of discipline, had sought

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within the Arab territory a shelter from military chastisement. Others, having heard of the medical schools in Egypt, and knowing of no other, assigned me an Egyptian origin; while some made me retrograde farther west to Morocco, and since all the inhabitants of that land are undoubted magicians, I thus became a magician in spite of myself. Now under each and all of these hypotheses I was a Mahometan. Then came the only questions that Arab courtesy permits of addressing to a stranger, namely, whence I came? whither I was going? and what was my business or occupation? And we would naturally reply that we came from Syria, and were bound eastward. Some, I have already said, suppose Syria, in common with the rest of the world, to be tenanted by Mahometans alone, and in consequence gave us credit for being so too. Others, going to the opposite extreme, were under the idea that all the Mahometans of Syria had been lately exterminated by the Christians, a cart-before-the-horse version of the massacres of 1860, but very current in Nejed, and then we became Christians again. Besides, Arab tradition holds that the medical art is the exclusive heritage of Christian nations, themselves the legatees of Greece, an opinion to which I have before alluded. On this score, too, we were classed among the followers of the Son of Mary. Lastly, a much greater number, even in the Wahhabee provinces, neither conjectured nor cared about it, and contented themselves with ascertaining our position in the visible world, holding our destined place in the invisible to be no concern of theirs. Once, and once only, did our title of Christians become a cause of accusation and a source of real danger. How that was brought about, and by what means Providence averted the peril, succeeding pages will show. Much, too, that accompanied our further travels in Nejed, Ḥaṣa, and 'Omān, will help to render clearer this obscure and intricate topic. Nor must we longer defer the supper and the hospitable invitations of Foleyḥ, who stands there at the town gate awaiting his ravenous guests, now more numerous by the addition of the four Darweeshes, the innocent cause of this interminable digression.

We were now under the outer walls of 'Eyoon, a good-sized town containing at least ten thousand inhabitants according to

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my rough computation. Its central site, at the very juncture of the great northern and western lines of communication, renders it important, and for this reason it is carefully fortified, that is, for the country, and furnished with watch-towers, much resembling manufacturing chimneys in size and shape, besides a massive and capacious citadel. My readers may anticipate analogous, though proportionate, features in most other towns and villages of this province. We halted close by the northern portal, and here deposited our baggage, over which two of the band remained to keep guard in our absence, while we accompanied Foleyḥ to his dwelling.

We passed a large tank, more than half full of standing water, near the centre of the town, and skirted for some minutes the wall of the citadel, which appears to be of ancient date. At last we reached a side-door in the street, and hence were ushered into a large and well-planted garden, full of the loftiest palm-trees that I have ever seen. Here a square arbour, capable of containing forty men, had been erected under the shade of the palms; it was on this occasion well spread with mats and carpets, upon which the guests arranged themselves according to rank and condition. Meanwhile Foleyḥ, who had already exchanged the dust-soiled clothes of the journey for clean shirts (it is the fashion here to multiply this important article of raiment by putting on a second over the first and a third over the second), and a magnificent upper robe of scarlet cloth, looking a very "pretty" man, stood at the entrance to introduce the guests and to superintend the solemn distribution of coffee by the youngsters of the family. In due time the supper itself arrived, two monstrous piles of rice and mutton, with some hashed vegetables, spices, and the rest, and dates for a side dish. Never were platters more speedily lightened of their contents, and loud praises were by all present bestowed on the cook and on his master. The sun had set, and as we were to start on our way during the night, it was impossible for us to remain longer within the town, whose gates were strictly closed during the hours of darkness. So we overwhelmed Foleyḥ with thanks and good wishes, and then returned to our baggage, while those who had been on guard in our absence now scampered off to the scene of hospitality,

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to get what share of the meal the jaws of their predecessors might not have devoured. It must have been a very scanty portion.

Between the town walls and the sand-hills close by was a sheltered spot, where we took about four hours of sleep, till the waning moon rose. Then all were once more in movement, camels gnarling, men loading, and the doctor and his apprentice mounting their beasts, all for Bereydah. But that town was distant, and when day broke at last there was yet a long road to traverse. This now lay amid mounds and valleys, thick with the vegetation already described; and somewhat after sunrise we took a full hour to pass the gardens and fields of Ghāṭ, a straggling village, where a dozen wells supplied the valley with copious irrigation. On the adjoining hillocks—I may not call them heights—was continued the series of watch-towers, corresponding with others farther off that belonged to villages seen by glimpses in the landscape: I heard, but soon forgot, their names. Inability to note down at once similar details was a great annoyance to me; but the sight of a pencil and pocket-book would have been just then particularly out of place, and I was obliged to trust to memory, which on this, as on too many other occasions, played me false. My notes, too, taken when circumstances permitted, were lost in part in the shipwreck off Barka; others, jotted down on loose scraps of paper, disappeared, I know not how, while I was in the dreary delirium of typhoid fever at Aboo-Shahr and Baṣrah. Surely my reader must be very hard to satisfy, if this catalogue of mishaps does not suffice him by way of apology for the defectiveness of my broken narrative.

We were now drawing on towards the scene of the great conflict which was ultimately to decide the destinies of 'Oneyzah and Ḳaseem, and some apprehension of falling in with foraging parties prevailed throughout our band. From Bedouins, indeed, here and henceforth, travellers have nothing to apprehend; they are few in number and feeble in force. But a detachment from either of the hostile armies might make exercise of military licence to the detriment of our baggage or persons. We had just left behind us the last plantations of Ghāṭ, and all thoughts and tongues were busy with fear and hope, when the negro horse-

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dealer, Ghorra, thought the opportunity for a practical joke too good to be neglected. Accordingly, after absenting himself for a few minutes, he rode suddenly up to the travellers with a terrified look, and informed them that he had just seen a large squadron of lancers and musketeers making right for our road. For several minutes the black liar enjoyed the confusion, alarm, preparations, and bustle produced by his news. The Meccans nearly fainted, and the women cried lamentably. But at last some bolder spirits, who had ventured a reconnoitre in the direction of the supposed enemy, returned with the consoling intelligence that it was all an invention. Anger then took the place of cowardice, and Ghorra hardly escaped rough usage for his gratuitous alarm.

A march of ten to twelve hours had tired us, and the weather was oppressively close, no uncommon phenomenon in Ḳaseem, where, what between low sandy ground and a southerly latitude, the climate is much more sultry than in Djebel Shomer, or the mountains of Ṭoweyḳ. So that we were very glad when the ascent of a slight eminence discovered to our gaze the long-desired town of Bereydah, whose oval fortifications rose to view amid an open and cultivated plain. It was a view for Turner. An enormous watch-tower, near a hundred feet in height, a minaret of scarce inferior proportions, a mass of bastioned walls, such as we had not yet witnessed in Arabia, green groves around and thickets of Ithel, all under the dreamy glare of noon, offered a striking spectacle, far surpassing what ever I had anticipated, and announced populousness and wealth. We longed to enter those gates and walk those streets. But we had yet a delay to wear out. At about a league from the town our guide Mubārek led us off the main road to the right, up and down several little but steep sand-hills and hot declivities, till about two in the afternoon, half roasted with the sun, we reached, never so weary, his garden gate.

Here, in a snug country-house, much resembling in size and construction many a peasant's dwelling in Southern Italy, lived Mubārek, with his family, brothers, and other relatives. Around was a pretty garden, with a central tank full of cool clear water from the adjoining well, and bordered by cotton plants, maize, and flowering shrubs, with date-trees at intervals;

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close by the tank stood an arbour of open trellis-work, but vine-roofed from the sun, just the place for dusty heat-wearied travellers to repose in and enjoy the freshness of the neighbouring pool. Here our host, without imitating the bad habit of the Druses in Lebanon (who begin by asking their guest what he would like, instead of anticipating his modesty), at once brought mats and cushions of country fashion, and when we had a moment taken breath, half reclining under the chequered shade, set before us a dainty dish of fresh dates, the produce of his orchard. Before long the members of the family who chanced to be at home, old and young, appeared one after another to pay their welcome, the women excepted, in whom such forwardness would be a breach of etiquette. For although the absolute seclusion, which, it is well known, imprisons, physically and morally, the fair sex in orthodox Mahometan lands, is seldom if ever observed in Arabia, where women bear a great part in active life and domestic cares, keep shops, buy, sell, and sometimes even go to war; yet there is not the easy and straightforward mixture of society that distinguishes Europe; and the female portion of the household, though not absolutely in the dark, is yet under a kind of shade. Thus women, young or old (I mean, of course, elderly), never sit at table with the men of the family, rarely join in their pleasure meetings, and above all may not in seemliness thrust themselves forward to welcome guests or strangers and converse with them. However, if one remains long enough to become in a manner part of the family, the ladies too end by growing more sociable, will now and then join in chat, and take interest in what is going on. Of course, in the dwellings of the poor women and men all live together, and little separation is or can be kept up; a narrow home going far to bring its tenants on a level. But in richer families and chieftains' houses the women are bound to occupy a separate quarter, whence, however, curiosity or business often draws them forth into the apartments of the other sex. Nor is the covering veil, though generally worn, nearly so strict an obligation as in Syria or Egypt. It is matter of custom and of creed, and readily dispensed with when occasion requires. Indeed, in some parts of Arabia, 'Omān for instance, and its provinces, it is barely in use. Nor are Bedouin

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women apt to impose on their grimed and wizened faces a concealment that might on the whole be for their advantage. Among the rigid Wahhabees alone the veil and the harem acquire something like exactness, and there Arab liberty consents to inflict on itself something of the servitude of Islam.

Our afternoon and evening passed very pleasantly with the Mubāreks, great and small, and a night's repose in the arbour—for the climate at this time of the year did not require the closer shelter of the house-roof—put us in condition to continue our way to Bereydah. The suburb of "Doweyrah," "the small knot of houses," where we now were, is situated about a league or rather less from the town, but of the latter we could from hence see nothing, so thick grew the Ithel on the intervening sand-ridges. Our present intention was to make a very short stay at Bereydah, and thence hasten on without delay to the interior and reach the capital of Nejed, where a longer sojourn would evidently be desirable. But man proposes and God disposes, and we had to learn by experience that, after all imaginable precautions and devices, the entrance of the Wahhabee stronghold was not so easy a matter, nor to be had for the first asking.

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CHAPTER VII

BEREYDAH

I cannot like, dread sire, your royal cave;
Because I see, by all the tracks about,
Full many a beast goes in, but none come out.—*Pope*

A STRANGE SIGHT ON THE WAY TO BEREYDAH—INDO-PERSIAN PILGRIM ENCAMPMENT — FEYṢUL'S CONDUCT TOWARDS THE PILGRIMS — ABOO-BOṬEYN, HIS EXTORTIONS AND FLIGHT—THE CARAVAN AT BEREYDAH —MOHANNA—HIS CHARACTER, POLICY—HIS TREACHERY TO A PERSIAN CARAVAN — HIS EXTORTIONS—OUR NEW LODGINGS—DIFFICULTY OF PROCEEDING FURTHER—VISIT TO MOHANNA—HIS CASTLE—ITS ARCHITECTURE—MOHANNA'S ḴA'HĀWAH—NEJED AND WAHHABEES—OUR EMBARRASSMENT—MEETING WITH ABOO-'EYSA—HIS FAMILY, PAST HISTORY, AND ADVENTURES — HIS POSITION UNDER THE RIAḌ GOVERNMENT — HIS CHARACTER — HE OFFERS TO CONDUCT US TO RIAḌ — A DAY AT BEREYDAH—VISIT TO THE PERSIAN ENCAMPMENT—PERSIANS AND TURKS—MARKET-PLACE — CENTRAL SQUARE — MOSQUE — WANT OF INSCRIPTIONS —SALT—CHARACTER OF THE TOWN AND POPULATION—THE HOUSES—CONVERSATION AT BEREYDAH — WALK IN THE GARDENS — ARAB HYDRAULIC MACHINES—MILITARY OPERATIONS—THE NEJDEAN CAMP—A SKIRMISH WITH THE MEN OF 'ONEYZAH — PART BORNE BY THE BEREYDAH TOWNSMEN—EVENING—ARAB AND PERSIAN VOICES—ARAB READING—LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN ḴASEEM—ORIGIN OF ARAB GRAMMAR—NIGHT AND MORNING — VILLAGES OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD — INFLUENCE OF THE WAHHABEE GOVERNMENT ON COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE, AND CATTLE BREEDING — GENERAL REACTION — CHANGE EFFECTED BY THE SA'OOD DYNASTY IN CENTRAL ARABIA — COMPARISON BETWEEN WAHHABEES AND OSMANLIS—VISIT TO THE SUBURBS OF 'ONEYZAH—MOḤAMMED-'ALEE-ESH-SHIRĀZEE — HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEYṢUL — HIS MOTIVES FOR A JOURNEY TO RIAḌ—HE AGREES WITH ABOO-'EYSA—HIS HISTORY AND CHARACTER—HABBĀSH AND THE COFFEE-MORTAR—WE LEAVE BEREYDAH.

THE morning was bright, yet cool, when we got free of the maze of Ithel and sand-slopes, and entered the lanes that traverse the garden circle round the town, in all quiet and security. But our approach to Bereydah was destined to furnish us an unexpected and undesired surprise, though indeed less startling than that which discomposed our first arrival at Ḥā'yel. We had just passed a well near the angle of

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a garden wall, when we saw a man whose garb and appearance at once bespoke him for a muleteer of the north, watering a couple of mules at the pool hard by. Barakāt and I stared with astonishment, and could hardly believe our eyes. For since the day we left the 'Ashja'yeeyah of Gaza for the south-eastern desert, we had never met with a like dress nor with these animals; and how then came they here? But there was no mistaking either the man or the beasts, and as the muleteer raised his head to look at the passers-by, he also started at our sight, and evidently recognized in us something that took him unawares. But the riddle was soon solved. A few paces farther on, our way opened out on the great plain that lies immediately under the town walls to the north. This space was now covered with tents and thronged with men of foreign dress and bearing, mixed with Arabs of town and desert, women and children, talking and quarrelling, buying and selling, going and coming; everywhere baskets full of dates and vegetables, platters bearing eggs and butter, milk and whey, meat hung on poles, bundles of firewood, &c. &c., stood ranged in rows, horsemen and camel-men were riding about between groups seated round fires or reclining against their baggage; in the midst of all this medley a gilt ball surmounted a large white pavilion of a make that I had not seen since last I left India some eleven years before, and numerous smaller tents of striped cloth and certainly not of Arab fashion clustered around; a lively scene, especially of a clear morning, but requiring some explanation from its exotic and non-Arab character.

These tents belonged to the great caravan of Persian pilgrims, on their return from Medinah to Meshid 'Alee by the road of Ḳaseem, and hence all this unusual concourse and bustle. Tāj-Djehān, the relict of 'Asaph Dowlah, a name familiar to Anglo-Bengalee readers, was the principal personage in the band, and hers was the gilt-topped tent. Several Indians of Lucknow and Delhi, relatives or attendants, were in her train, and to her litter appertained the mules and muleteer whose apparition had so amazed us. The rest of the caravan was composed partly of Persians proper, natives of Shirāz, Ispahan, and other Iranian towns, and partly of a still larger number belonging to the hybrid race that forms the Shiya'ee population of Meshid 'Alee,

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Kerbelah, and Bagdad. All of course were of the sect just mentioned, though very diverse in national origin. Along with them, and belonging to the first or genuine Persian category, was a personage scarcely less important than the Begum herself, namely, Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee, native of Shirāz, as his denomination implies, and representative of the Persian government at Meshid 'Alee, actually commissioned by orders from Teheran with the unenviable office of director or headman in this laborious and not over-safe pilgrimage. With him and with his retinue we shall soon become very intimately acquainted. The total of the caravan amounted to two hundred, or rather more.

They had assembled at Riaḍ in Nejed, where they had arrived, some from the northerly rendezvous of Meshid 'Alee, and others from that of Aboo-Shahr (often corrupted on maps into Bushire), whence they had crossed the Persian Gulf to the port of 'Ojeyr, and thus passed on to Hofhoof and Riaḍ. Here Feyṣul, after exacting the exorbitant sum which Wahhabee orthodoxy claims from Shiya'ee heretics as the price of permission to visit the sacred city and the tomb of the Prophet, had assigned them for guide and leader one 'Abd-el-'Azeez-Aboo-Boṭeyn, a Nejdean of the Nejdeans, who was to conduct and plunder them in the name of God and the true faith all the rest of the way to Mecca and back again.

I mentioned in a former chapter the negotiations carried on by Ṭelāl with the Persian government to obtain the passage of this annual caravan through his own dominions, and I related his partial success and liberal conduct towards the few whose good luck led them by the northern route through Ḥā'yel. But the way by Central Nejed is more direct, and for that reason preferable for the Persians, on condition of having tolerable immunity from danger and pillage. Thus, in order to spare the expenses and fatigues of a comparatively roundabout track, though after all the difference between the two roads does not exceed six or eight days, they had consented to compound for the payment of a fixed sum to the Wahhabee autocrat, and to rely on his honour for a safe passage and needful assistance.

Feyṣul, overjoyed to draw this additional silver stream to his mill, waived the motives of bigotry and national hatred which

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had more than once led his predecessors to refuse the most advantageous offers when made by heretics. Indeed, "for a consideration" he would probably have furnished the Devil himself with passport, camel, and guide. Still he felt himself bound in conscience to make the unbelievers pay roundly for the negative good treatment which he thus consented to afford, and took his measures accordingly.

Forty gold tomāns were fixed as the claim of the Wahhabee treasury on every Persian pilgrim for his passage through Riaḍ, and forty more for a safe-conduct through the rest of the empire; eighty in all. On his side Feyṣul was to furnish from among his own men a guide invested with absolute power in whatever regarded the special arrangement of the march, and we may without any breach of charity suppose that the king's servant could not do less than imitate the good example of his master in fleecing the heretics to the best of his ability. Every local governor on the way would naturally enough take the hint, and strive not to let the "enemies of God" (for this is the sole title given by Wahhabees to all except themselves) go by without spoiling them more or less. So that, all counted up, the legal and necessary dues levied on every Persian Shiya'ee while traversing Central Arabia and under Wahhabee guidance and protection, amounted, I found, to about one hundred and fifty gold tomāns, equalling nearly sixty pounds sterling English, no light expenditure for a Persian, and no despicable gain to an Arab.

But besides this, seeming casualties might occur, helping to shear the wool still closer, nay, sometimes taking off the skin altogether. Such was the case with the hapless Persians at the very time of our meeting. Their conductor, Aboo-Boṭeyn, had taken from them whatever custom entitled him to by way of advanced payment, and charged the disconsolate Tāj-Djehān more especially at the rate of her supposed wealth rather than of any fixed precedent. But he had done more, and by dint of threats and bullying of all descriptions, including blows administered by his orders to the Persian commissioner, Moḥammed 'Alee himself, and in his own tent, had managed to get countless extras out of those entrusted to his guidance, till he had filled his saddle-bags with tomāns, and loaded his camels with plunder.

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But on his return along with his injured *protégés* from Medinah, whither he had led them to complete their devotion and his profit, he began to fear lest they should lodge a complaint against him at Bereydah, which lay on their road, the more so that Moḥammed, Feyṣul's third son, was now there in person, and that he should ultimately be forced to refund his ill-gotten wealth, not, indeed, to its Shiya'ee owners, for of that there was little danger under Wahhabee arbitration, but to the Riaḍ treasury; while he himself might come in for an awkward impeachment for embezzling what in Feyṣul's eyes should be for the common benefit of the "faithful." Probably his fears were not wholly groundless; but at the worst a few presents conveyed in time to Mohanna, the governor of Bereydah, to Moḥammed, and to his royal father, would assuredly have "made all well again." But to this sacrifice Aboo-Boṭeyn's grasping avarice could not consent, and in compliance with its dictates he resolved on the very worst course possible for him, namely, that of anticipating investigation by flight. So when the pilgrims arrived at 'Eyoon, the same village where we supped with Foleyḥ two nights since, 'Aboo-Boṭeyn absconded, money and all, and took refuge in the rebel town of 'Oneyzah, leaving Tāj-Djehān, Moḥammed Alee, and the rest, to find their way out of Arabia by themselves as best they might.

"For a consideration," the good folks of 'Eyoon guided the distracted pilgrims to Bereydah. But misfortunes "come not single spies;" and the Persians had now to exemplify a certain ill-omened proverb touching the frying-pan and the fire. At Bereydah they had fallen into the clutches of a genuine Wahhabee, and lay at the tender mercies of the most wicked and heartless of all Nejdean governors, Mohanna-el-'Anezee.

This was that same Mohanna whom 'Abd-Allah, the son of Feyṣul, had some years before nominated vice-ruler of Bereydah and Ḳaseem, after the massacre of the 'Aley'yān family. Mohanna had in every respect come up to his master's desires, and followed in his footsteps. Every imaginable means was employed by this shrewd and bad man to break the spirit of Ḳaseem, to exhaust its resources, and to extinguish the last sparks of liberty. All the Wahhabee regulations against silk, tobacco, ornaments, and so forth, were rigorously enforced, to

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the ruin of commerce, while the richest merchants and busiest traders were, by a system of which Ḥasa will soon furnish us with a yet more striking example, taken away at a moment's notice from their counters and warehouses, to hang a matchlock on their unwilling shoulders, gird on a sword whose use they had well-nigh forgotten, and mount on ever-recurring Wahhabee expeditions against the enemies of God and the faith, that is, most often against their own yet independent countrymen, till all of them had lost their trade, and many their lives. Meanwhile Mohanna gratified his own personal rapacity, even more than the spiteful feelings of his employer, by fines, exactions, and mostly involuntary contributions, on every pretext and on every occasion; and confident that some little private peculation might well be excused in so valuable a servant of government, he accumulated to his own uses more wealth than Ḳaseem had ever seen in the hands of one single individual, however absolute. But justly careful not to put the good cause in danger of losing his personal services, he never went himself on the expeditions in which he jeopardized the unimportant lives of the Ḳaseem "polytheists"—for so their conquerors still designate them—and remained at home to brood over his money-bags while others gathered the money for him on the scene of danger.

At the discretion of this individual the Shiya'ee pilgrims now found themselves. What favour they could expect at the hands of so true a believer might easily be imagined, and in case they should have any uncertainty on that point, an incident of only six years' date was there to show them the treatment that Mohanna had in store for Persians.

The fact seems almost too bad for belief, yet it is certainly true. In 1856 a large Persian caravan, provided with much wealth, even after the close-shearing of Riaḍ, came hither on its way to Mecca, and halted at Bereydah, under the protection of Mohanna. The cupidity of the governor was excited at the view of their abundant baggage, and the conjecture of a corresponding sum of ready money in their purses. Accordingly, after inviting the pilgrims to repose a few days from the fatigues of the road in quality of guests, he began to alarm them with an appalling picture of dangers from wayside robbers and Bedouins, to whom their wealth would be open should

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they persist in bearing it along with them to the Ḥejāz. The better to obviate these risks he offered to take their valuables of whatever description under his guard, promising to keep everything untouched till their return, while his own son should accompany them as guide to Mecca, in pledge of his father's good faith and honourable intentions.

The deluded Persians consented. Whatever of their baggage was not absolutely necessary to the journey before them was lodged in the storehouses of Mohanna, and their extra money found a place in his strong box. The pilgrims then set out, under the guidance of Mohanna's eldest son, whose name I have often heard, but forgotten. The youth was a worthy scion of the paternal stock. Instead of conducting his dupes by the secure and ordinary track, he led them by the sandy desert and waterless wastes of the Nefood, that lies to the north of the route, close under the western offshoot of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ. Forced marches, burning suns, and scarcity of water and of all other necessaries of life, soon exhausted their strength, and while they encamped weary and dispirited in the midst of the sandy labyrinth, the son of Mohanna, with all the Arabs in his service, rode off during the night by tracks known to him and his only, and left the pilgrims without leader, without provisions, and without water, to die.

Almost all perished. A few only, after infinite suffering and toil, found their way out of the mazy desert, and returned to tell their melancholy tale at Bereydah. But there Mohanna refused to recognize them, denied whatever property he held of theirs, or of their deceased companions, and left them unaided to beg their way back to Meshid 'Alee. For two years after no Persian ventured to set foot in Central Arabia. At last the apologies and promises of Feyṣul persuaded the easily-gulled authorities of Teheran and Coufa to send their pilgrims once more on the Nejdean road. But no enquiry was made by the Wahhabee monarch into the crime committed by his subordinate, and Mohanna enjoyed undisturbed the profits of his wholesale treachery.

At this man's orders were now Tāj-Djehān and her fellow-pilgrims. He had already before our arrival detained them a good fortnight under the walls of Bereydah, while he put every

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engine of extortion into play against them, and awaited from Feyṣul some further hint as to the conduct he was to hold with these "enemies of God."

Much of this we learnt afterwards, but we felt from the first desirous of becoming acquainted with the pilgrims, while we were on the other hand rather fearful of meeting among them some chance face of recognition, or some over-inquisitive and knowing north-countryman. Our experience of the immense ignorance of the indigenous Arab population regarding whatever outwent their own territorial limits, had long since freed us from all apprehension of their observing powers, however keen within their own native circle. But an inhabitant of Bagdad or Damascus, a Turk or an Arnaout, might come closer in his guesses. However, the time for realizing our wishes or fears was not yet, and we left the crowded encampment on one side and turned to enter the city gates.

Here, and this is generally the case in the larger Arab towns of old date, the fortifications surround houses alone, and the gardens all lie without, sometimes defended—at 'Oneyzah, for example—by a second outer girdle of walls and towers, but sometimes, as at Bereydah, devoid of any mural protection. The town itself is composed exclusively of streets, houses, and market-places, and bears in consequence a more regular appearance than the recent and village-like arrangements of the Djowf and even of Ḥā'yel. We passed a few streets, tolerably large but crooked, and then made the camels kneel down in a little square or public place, where I remained seated by them on the baggage, switch in hand, like an ordinary Arab traveller, and Barakāt with Mubārek went in search of lodgings.

Very long did the half-hour seem to me during which I had thus to mount guard till my companions returned from their quest; the streets were full of people, and a disagreeable crowd of the lower sort was every moment collecting round myself and my camels, with all the inquisitiveness of the idle and vulgar in every land. Nor was it always easy for me, thus "beset and sprited" with more fools than ever Imogen was, to keep up the equanimity of temper and sedate reserve proper to well-bred Arabs on such occasions. At last my companions came back to say that they had found what they wanted; a kick or two

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brought the camels on their legs again, and we moved off to our new quarters.

The house in question was hardly more than five minutes' walk from the north gate, and at about an equal distance only from the great market-place on the other side. Its position was therefore good. It possessed two large rooms on the ground storey, and three smaller, besides a spacious courtyard surrounded by high walls. A winding stair of irregular steps and badly lighted, like all in the Nejed, led up to an extent of flat roof, girt round by a parapet six feet high, and divided into two compartments by a cross-wall, thus affording a very tolerable place for occupation morning and evening, at the hours when the side-walls might yet project enough shade to shelter those seated alongside of them, besides an excellent sleeping-place for night. The entire building was old, of perhaps two hundred years or more, solid, and with some pretensions to symmetry in its parts; the doors were of massive and carved Ithel-wood, and a fireplace in one of the rooms below evidently marked it out for a kitchen. Another tolerably spacious apartment of oblong shape was a K'hāwah or parlour; the little rooms had been tenanted by the ladies of the mansion, who now, with the rest of the family, moved off to take up their abode next door.

The owner now arrived to greet us, keys in hand. Ahmed was his name, a good-humoured man, but sly, and inclined to drive a hard bargain with the strangers. However, my associates, both quite as shrewd as he, soon reduced his terms within reasonable limits, and I think that a Londoner will hardly consider eighteen-pence per month a very exorbitant house rent, especially for the comfortable accommodations just described. All extras of repair and arrangement, if necessary, were to fall on the proprietor, who had also to find us in water, though subsequently out of our own free generosity we rewarded the sun-burnt nymph who brought it daily from the well for her laborious services.

In this domicile then we arranged ourselves and chattels, and after partaking in common a morning meal of friendship with the owner of the house and Mubārek, the latter took his leave and returned home to Doweyrah.

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I have already said that we were desirous of making very short stay at Bereydah. In consequence we agreed not to embarrass ourselves with patients and practice, but to keep our medicines packed up, and to put off any individuals who might address themselves to us for doctoring with the answer that we did not mean to stop in the town long enough to undertake business. This was however a mistake on our part, for in the tedious delay of nearly twenty days that awaited us here, a little employment would have agreeably diversified our monotonous leisure hours, and afforded us wider means of acquaintance and information.

Mubārek had parted from us with a promise of supplying us with beasts, and taking us on to Riaḍ. But he had no real intention of doing so, it was merely a discreet evasion to avoid the discourtesy of a positive "I will not," or of its equivalent "I cannot." Such unwillingness to appear unwilling is among Arabs a frequent source of innocent deceptions, if deceptions indeed they can be termed, like the "not at home," or "slightly indisposed" of our own land; whoever has to do with Easterns should be prepared for them, and take them good-naturedly. We were now no novices in the country, and had already conjectured that Mubārek was no more likely to keep his word than we to take it. Accordingly we tried other individuals, and hardly had we been installed in our rooms than we began to seek right and left the means of leaving them. But no one offered himself or his camels, while we, for our part, could not distinctly see whence this reluctance arose. At last we resolved to apply to Mohanna himself, with whose character we were as yet but imperfectly acquainted, for our cautious neighbours and companions had not entrusted to our untried ears all the details with which my readers are already conversant; we only learned them in process of time and through various channels.

With this intention we enquired what was the best time for visiting the governor, and were informed that, unlike Coriolanus, his reception hours were before breakfast, namely, about sunrise or not much later. So, on the third morning after our arrival, we betook ourselves to his palace, with the intention of engaging him to the friendly office of finding us guides and companions for our journey to the 'Aareḍ. Mohanna lived in the old castle,

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situated in the north-east quarter of the town, and a little within the walls; it covers a large extent of space, to which its height does not sufficiently correspond, and it looks in fact more like a huge collection of outhouses than a palace, with little symmetry or order to show. Some portions of it are ancient, that is, of four or five hundred years' date, at a rough estimate; for Arab architecture, unlike our own Norman or Gothic, does not chronicle the progress of centuries in line and curve. Massive, ungainly, and imposing from size alone, the main elements of beauty and development, the arch, the capital, the moulding, the frieze, the gable, are either totally absent, or exist only in their most primitive and embryotic form, from which no successive stages have shaped them into grace and perfection. The materials of the construction are almost the only witnesses to its relative antiquity. Stone at an early period, shaped or rough; stone mixed with earth, as here, later; earth alone in the Wahhabee cycle; these are the main tokens to indicate the century that reared the pile. To the first of these three periods belong the castle of Djowf and the Marid tower; to the second many buildings of Ḳaseem, at Bereydah and 'Eyoon, for example; to the third, Ḍerey'eeyah and Riaḍ. From the highest antiquity down to the Hejirah the first may be assigned; from the Hejirah to within two hundred years back the second. But east and south of Nejed, new architectural elements, new styles, new progress will appear, and claim special explanation in their place. In the castle of Mohanna, now before us, part belongs to more recent and variable date, but the whole has been put together by chance rather than by design; some walls of stone, others of earth, part is plastered, part naked. The central edifice is strong, and capable of standing an Arab siege, but not above thirty-five feet in height, nor possessed of a tower; the great watch-chimney, to give it its most descriptive name, is detached from the castle, and stands at some distance close by the town wall. A high outer gate leads within the first enclosure, a square court full of warehouses and lodgings for camel-drivers and palace servants; a small and strongly-built doorway gives entrance to that section where the governor dwells in person.

At the moment of our arrival Mohanna was out: he had gone

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at daybreak to a meeting in the Persian camp, where his present business was to extort a sum equal to nearly six hundred pounds of English money from Tāj-Djehān, over and above a thousand pounds already wrung out of her and her pilgrim companions. This negotiation absorbed all his thoughts and almost all his time; for the war, he left it mainly to Feyṣul's younger son, Moḥammed, whose camp we have yet to visit. However, after some waiting at the door with several other expectant visitors, we saw the worthy Nejdean arrive, in deep conversation with his satellites. Slightly acknowledging the salutations of the bystanders he entered the Ḳ'hāwah, and we followed with the crowd.

After a brief question and answer, no further notice was ours from Mohanna. He had other things to think of, and the simplicity of our dress did not bespeak us persons of wealth and consideration enough to serve for friends or booty. Coffee was served all round as usual, and immediately after the governor rose to go and look after the "main chance," leaving us seated with the other guests to discuss the nature of his occupations, and the news of the day. At the moment we were rather inclined to feel annoyed at receiving so little notice from one to whom we looked for help, but it was in fact a providential event in our favour. For had Mohanna brought his cunning and rapacity to bear on us, which he certainly would have done under ordinary circumstances, there would have been little likelihood of our reaching Riaḍ. Meanwhile we had nothing for it but to return home, whither some respectable townsmen now accompanied us, and from the tone of their conversation we soon learned to think that Mohanna had done us his best favour by neglect.

However, the main difficulty remained unsolved, and all our enquiries about companions for the Nejdean road proved utterly fruitless. For three days more we questioned and crossquestioned, sought high and low, loitered in the streets and by the gates, addressed ourselves to townsmen and Bedouins, but in vain. At last we began to understand the true condition of affairs, and what were the obstacles that choked our way.

The central provinces of Nejed, the genuine Wahhabee country, is to the rest of Arabia a sort of lion's den, on which

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few venture and yet fewer return. "Hāḍa Nejed; men dakhelaha f'mā kharaj," "this is Nejed, he who enters it does not come out again," said an elderly inhabitant of whom we had demanded information; and such is really very often the case. Its mountains, once the fastnesses of robbers and assassins, are at the present day equally or even more formidable as the stronghold of fanatics who consider every one save themselves an infidel or a heretic, and who regard the slaughter of an infidel or a heretic as a duty, at least a merit. In addition to this general cause of anticipating a worse than cold reception in Nejed, wars and bloodshed, aggression and tyranny, have heightened the original antipathy of the surrounding population into special and definite resentment for wrongs received, perhaps inflicted, till Nejed has become for all but her born sons doubly dangerous, and doubly hateful. Hence, not to speak of mere foreigners, Arabs themselves, of whatever race or persuasion, Mahometans or otherwise, inhabitants of Shomer or townsmen of Mecca, from Djowf to Yemen, are very little disposed to venture on the plateaus of Ṭoweyḳ or to thread Wadi Ḥaneefah, without some strong reason, and under particularly favourable or really urgent circumstances.

But at this time some other superadded difficulties complicated the question, and rendered our researches more and more sterile. The war now raging, the siege and its accompanying ravages, though nominally directed against 'Oneyzah alone, were in reality against the province at large, which had throughout either openly or at least in feeling espoused the cause of the injured town. Bereydah itself, in spite of the presence of Mohanna and his numerous satellites, in spite of the Wahhabee force encamped under its very walls, could hardly be kept from revolt. Every heart and every tongue was enlisted against Feyṣul and in favour of Zāmil, rejoicing in his successes, sympathizing in his reverses. All this was of course no secret to the Nejdean governor and his associates, nor could they be ignorant of the deputations in search of assistance sent now to Mecca and now to Djebel Shomer, and that not only by Zāmil and the garrison of 'Oneyzah, but even by the inhabitants of Rass, of Ḥenākeeyah, and of Bereydah itself. Hence the natives of Ḳaseem, who were never in odour of sanctity among the Nejdean Wahhabees, now

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positively, to borrow a scriptural phrase, "did stink among the inhabitants of the land," as the worst of infidels and abettors of infidels, and they for their part were less desirous than ever of crossing the eastern frontier of their province.

There was more yet. By the best construction that could be put on us ourselves and on our doings, we were certainly strangers, come from a land stigmatized by the Wahhabees as a hotbed of idolatry and polytheism, subjects too of a hostile and infidel government. To be held for spies of the Ottoman was but a degree better here than to be considered spies of Christian or European governments; and though we might fairly hope to steer clear of the latter imputation, we might readily fall foul of the former. In a word, to introduce such unsavoury individuals into the lands of the Saints was hardly less dangerous to our guidesmen than to ourselves; like the peacock who in Mahometan tradition opened the wicket of Paradise to let the Devil in, and received no inconsiderable share in the Devil's own punishment.

To sum up, we were now in a thorough "fix," and saw no means of getting free. Barred in on every side by causes whose nature and strength we had been taught to appreciate, we knew not whither to turn. Five days of bootless search in town and camp had convinced us that in looking for a guide eastwards we were, to use an Arab proverb, "hunting for the egg of the 'Anḳā," or Eastern Phœnix. But we were no less determined not to be beaten, and it was a great relief to notice that after all our running about no one seemed to entertain the least suspicion or ill-will regarding us, nor even paid us that exclusive and minute attention which we had hitherto attracted, much more than was comfortable, wherever we had taken up our abode. The war preoccupied every mind, nor had we drawn many eyes upon us by our wonted display of medical art. Indeed the ring of Gyges would have been much more to our purpose in Bereydah than all the phials of Hippocrates, and I often wished for it.

At last Providence opened us a door, and, which is not seldom the case, exactly where we least expected it, and in so doing furnished us with the means of visiting not Nejed only, but even the more distant regions farther east. This was, in fact,

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the turning-point of our whole journey, and a seemingly casual meeting facilitated while it modified and extended the remainder of our course from Bereydah to Nejed, from Nejed to 'Omān, from 'Omān back to Bagdad.

It was the sixth day after our arrival, and the 22nd of September, when about noon I was sitting alone and rather melancholy in our K'hāwah, and trying to beguile the time with reading the incomparable Divan of Ebn-el-Farid, the favourite companion of my travels. Barakāt had at my request betaken himself out of doors, less in hopes of success than to "go to and fro in the earth and walk up and down in it;" nor did I now dare to expect that he would return any wiser than he had set forth. When lo! after a long two hours' absence, he came in with cheerful face, index of good tidings.

Good, indeed, they were, none better. Their bearer said, that after roaming awhile to no purport through the streets and market-place, he had bethought him of a visit to the Persian camp. There, while straying among the tents, "like a washerman's dog," a Hindoo would say, he noticed somewhat aloof from the crowd a small group of pilgrims seated near their baggage on the sand, while curls of smoke going up from amid the circle indicated the presence of a fire, which at that time of day could be for nothing else than coffee. Civilized though Barakāt undoubtedly was, he was yet by blood and heart an Arab, and for an Arab to see coffee-making, and not to put himself in the way of getting a share, would be an act of self-restraint totally unheard of; so he approached the group, and was of course invited to sit down and drink.

This free and easy system of introduction and acquaintance may not be exactly adapted to the exigencies of European society; nor might it be prudent in a London gentleman to invite every looker-in at his parlour window to take a place alongside of him at the breakfast or dinner table. But extremes are faulty, and the "have him taken up by a policeman," or "trespassers prosecuted according to law," and so forth, with a sort of "whose dog are you?" look for any stranger who chances to seem inclined to aught beyond mere give and take, indicate perhaps a condition of feeling even less wise, and certainly less humane and genial, than the readiness of the Arab to welcome

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and invite whoever approaches, and to enter into conversation with the first man he looks in the face. But we are now in Arabia. The party wherein Barakāt took place consisted of two wealthy Persians, accompanied by three or four of that class of men, half servants, half companions, who often hook on to travellers at Bagdad or its neighbourhood, besides a mulatto of Arabo-negrine origin, and his master, this last being the leader of the band, and the giver of the aromatic entertainment.

Barakāt's whole attention was at one engrossed by this personage. A remarkably handsome face, of a type evidently not belonging to the Arab Peninsula, long hair curling down to the shoulders, an over-dress of fine-spun silk, somewhat soiled by travel, a coloured handkerchief of Syrian manufacture on the head, a manner and look indicating an education much superior to that ordinary in his class and occupation, a camel-driver's, were peculiarities sufficient of themselves to attract notice, and give rise to conjecture. But when these went along with a welcome and a salute in the forms and tone of Damascus or Aleppo, and a ready flow of that superabundant and overcharged politeness for which the Syrian subjects of the Turkish empire are renowned, Barakāt could no longer doubt that he had a fellow-countryman, and one, too, of some note, before him.

Such was in fact the case. Aboo-'Eysa, to give him the name by which he was commonly known in these parts, though in his own country he bears another denomination, was a native of Aleppo, and son of a not unimportant individual in that fair city. His education, and the circumstances of his early youth, had rendered him equally conversant with townsmen and herdsmen, with citizens and Bedouins, with Arabs and Europeans. By lineal descent he was a Bedouin, since his grandfather belonged to the Meẓādimah, who are themselves an offshoot of the Benoo-Khālid. This last tribe, natives of Ḥaṣa and the western coast of the Persian Gulf, where we shall visit them in the course of our journeys, sent a large emigratory detachment towards Syria at a very early period, apparently about the fourth or fifth century of our era. In Syria some families of these nomades retained the name of their mother clan, and are well known as Benoo-Khālid to all conversant with the desert

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north of Ḥoms and Ḥamah; others, like the Mejādimah, changed their appellation. But Aboo-'Eysa, though of Bedouin descent, was in habits, thoughts, and manners a very son of Aleppo, where he had passed the greater part of his boyhood and youth. When about twenty-five years of age, he became involved, culpably or not, in the great conspiracy against the Turkish government which broke out in the Aleppine insurrection of 1852. Like many others he was compelled to anticipate consequences by a prompt flight and a long sojourn far from the white walls of his native city. After a year or more of rambling and adventure, Aboo-'Eysa ventured to reappear among his fellow-townsmen, but his goods and those of his family had been plundered or confiscated, and he was now a ruined man. His father too had died shortly after the insurrection.

Commerce offered him a means of repairing his losses, and the liberality of a wealthy Israelite friend came in to his aid. He commenced his mercantile career as a travelling commissioner between Aleppo and Bagdad, besides some business on his own score, and sometimes he extended his journeys and his affairs to Baṣrah. Master at last of a considerable sum, he resolved to try his fortune in the Indian horse-trade of the Persian Gulf. This idea was not merely the result of the hope of gain; it had its origin partly in a desire, not unnatural in a Mejādimah, to visit the cradle of his race in Ḥaṣa, and partly in a special passion for the horse, a "penchant" which often remains through life when early years have been familiar with the saddle. In pursuance of his scheme, Aboo-'Eysa now shipped himself and his stock in hand at Baṣrah, and sailed to Koweyt, whence on by land through the province of Ḥaṣa. Here he collected a suitable number of horses for the Indian mart, and with them embarked at Baḥreyn, on a ship Bombay-wards bound.

But his hopes of wealth and increase were blighted in the bud by casualties rarely absent from this kind of speculation. I once heard that a prudent Norfolk man, invited to take part in a similar line of business, replied with better sense than grammar, "Horses eats, and horses dies, and I will have nothing to do with things as eats and things as dies." Die Aboo-'Eysa's

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horses certainly did of some epidemic disease that assailed the animal cargo of the ship, and before he set foot on Apollo (properly, Pulwar) Bunder, more than half his stud had gone to feed the sharks of the Indian Sea. The survivors were landed in sorry case and stabled in the Fort. But they had come at a wrong season, "gram" was dear, and prices low, and the sale concluded in a dead loss. Aboo-'Eysa returned to Baḥreyn without horses and almost without money, and feeling ashamed or afraid to revisit Bagdad and Aleppo in such a plight, thought it more advisable to remain in Ḥaṣa, on the principle of continental residence practised occasionally by gentlemen whose bills are longer than their purses.

In Ḥaṣa he met with a cordial welcome and helpful friends. Nor was this strange, considering his personal good qualities, delicate tact, pleasant conversation, a good head except where money was concerned, and a warm heart—I have seldom known a warmer. Before many months passed at Hofhoof he had by him wherewithal to make a considerable purchase in the fine and highly-valued cloth mantles or 'Abee, which constitute the staple manufacture of that town, and with this capital he tried his commercial luck once more. But here again disappointment awaited him. A cousin of his had tracked him to Ḥaṣa, and to this relative Aboo-'Eysa entrusted his wares for sale at Baṣrah. But when the faithless agent found himself in possession of a large sum, the price of Aboo-'Eysa's goods, he conceived the design of setting up on his own account, and sailed away with the money, to spend his ill-gotten wealth in Kurrachee and Bombay, whence he never returned.

Our unfortunate hero was a third time reduced to utter want, and remained some time in great difficulties. At last he managed to collect a small sum, and invested it in a sword and a few Persian carpets, with which he set off for Riad. Arrived there, he bestowed his purchases in form of presents on Maḥboob, the prime minister of Feyṣul, and on Feyṣul himself. After this preliminary step, he begged of the king a patent, enabling him to occupy a subordinate post of guide in the annual transport of Persian pilgrims across the Nejed. His request was granted, and he now entered on a new and a more congenial kind of life.

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When we met him, he had followed this career for three years. His politeness, easy manners, and strict probity soon gained him a favourable reputation among the pilgrims, accustomed to the greedy rapacity and uncourteous bearing of Wahhabee guides. But Aboo-'Eysa possessed besides a quality particularly valuable to Shiya'ee companions. All religions and sects, parties and opinions, were to him of equal esteem and honour, while he himself appeared to be attached to no special school of doctrine, and entirely unfettered by any fixed or distinctive practices. When a lad at Aleppo he had been even more familiar with Jews and Christians than with the Mahometans of the town, and his own turn of mind led him to give either of the former a decided preference over the disciples of Islam. Among Mahometans again, he cared absolutely nothing about Sonnee or Shiya'ee; "all were right, and all were wrong." This disposition, however, is not uncommon among Arabs. Aboo-'Eysa carried out his toleration to a second consequence more rarely met with, and made no more account of national than of religious differences. Persian and Arab, Oriental and European, were all alike welcome with him; he admitted the good qualities of each and all, without prejudice or preference. Hence, while his Shiya'ee companion was secure from untimely dispute touching the succession of the Caliphate and the respective merits of 'Othmān and 'Alee, the Persian also could vaunt before him uncontradicted the excellences of Ispahan or Teheran, and the glories of their rulers. Thus qualified for his office, Aboo-'Eysa had before long a large band of pilgrims at his back, and attained a degree of wealth above whatever he had possessed on his first arrival at Hofhoof. Meanwhile his frequent journeys backwards and forwards through the very heart of Arabia enabled him to increase his already numerous acquaintance by that of the central chiefs, townsmen, or Bedouins, to whom his lavish generosity rendered him peculiarly acceptable. His coffee was always on the fire, his tobacco-pouch invariably open, his supper at the mercy of every neighbour. He seemed, in fact—and of this I can speak after personal experience—in a hurry to throw away on his friends whatever he had acquired, nor was that little.

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His ordinary residence, when not engaged on a journey or conducting pilgrims, was at Hoofhoof, the capital of Ḥaṣa; an abode which placed him at a convenient distance from his Wahhabee employers, whose straitlaced exclusiveness he disliked and ridiculed, while they on their part were liable to take scandal at his tobacco-smoking, silk-wearing latitudinarianism, if brought too often under their immediate notice. Indeed the more zealous leaders of the high orthodox party at Riaḍ had more than once suggested to Feyṣul how improper it was to acknowledge for a government servant, and to cover with the royal protection, one little better, if at all, than an infidel. Aboo-'Eysa knew this, and avoided needless irritation by showing himself very rarely in the Nejdean metropolis, and when he did, it was with some judicious present in hand, to smooth away difficulties and conciliate toleration. By this conduct he had managed, in spite of numerous counter-intrigues, to maintain for three years his lucrative position, and though sailing very close, had never run directly on the rocks.

However, in the journey from which he was now returning, his ordinary and unsuspicious easiness of temper had brought him into serious difficulties of another nature. The caravan had been, as I before stated, headed by Aboo-Boṭeyn, a genuine Wahhabee, and no particular friend to our hero. Aboo-'Eysa contrived to get on fairly well with his band, whom he had escorted from the Persian Gulf up to Mecca, and made a very brilliant appearance at the Ca'abah amid his pilgrim-companions, with servants and slaves attending. But after leaving the sacred city with the Persians on their way to Medinah, he was attacked by a dangerous illness, and laid on a sick bed, incapable of movement, and almost given over by the physicians of the town. Aboo-Boṭeyn found this a favourable opportunity for doing a spite to his rival; and the treachery of one of Aboo-'Eysa's attendants afforded him means for plundering the apartments of the half-unconscious invalid; so that long before the latter was able to leave his couch, Aboo-Boṭeyn had departed with most of the pilgrims, and with Aboo-'Eysa's goods and chattels into the bargain.

The convalescent remained behind with six camels and a small sum of money. Two Persians had been, like himself,

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detained by illness, an event exceedingly common among the visitors of the unhealthy Ḥejāz lowlands in the summer season. Aboo-'Eysa now sold two of his camels, reserving four, one for himself, one for his servant, and two for the pilgrims, and thus came on to Bereydah, where the whole caravan was now assembled. Henceforth their paths had to separate, for while the Persians were bound for the neighbourhood of Meshid 'Alee by the north-eastern road, Aboo-'Eysa's goal lay at Hofhoof, where his wife, an Abyssinian woman, and his son, awaited him at home. Hence he had to follow the south-eastern path right across Nejed, and exactly where we ourselves desired to penetrate it; a circumstance which facilitated his becoming our guide, in case we proposed it.

Other circumstances also coincided in predisposing him to take us in his company. Hardly had he set his eyes on Barakāt than the recognition, so far as country went, was mutual, and Aboo-'Eysa, long accustomed to all classes and descriptions of Syrians between Gaza and Aleppo, readily perceived that his new acquaintance was something more and better than what he gave himself out for. Accordingly he received him with marked politeness, and carefully informed himself of our whence and whither. Barakāt, overjoyed to find at last a kind of opening after difficulties that had appeared to obstruct all further progress, made no delay in enquiring whether he would undertake our guidance to Riaḍ. Aboo-'Eysa replied that he was just on the point of separating from his friends the Persians, whose departure would leave camels enough and to spare at his disposition, and that so far there was no hindrance to the proposal. As for the Wahhabees and their unwillingness to admit strangers within their limits, he stated himself to be well known to them, and that in his company we should have nothing to fear from their suspicious criticism. Barakāt next requested to know the hire of his beasts, and Aboo-'Eysa in return named so low a price, barely half in fact that we had paid from Ḥā'yel to Ḳaseem, though the distance before us was greater by a third, that no doubt remained of his being no less desirous of our society than we of his. He added that in two or three days at most he would be ready to start.

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Better news could not be imagined, and Barakāt hastened to impart it to me; but before quitting his new acquaintance, of his own authority he invited Aboo-'Eysa to supper with us the same evening, hoping thus to render the engagement surer, and to give room for increase of knowledge on both sides.

We now made our preparations for the repast, and bought, a rare occurrence with us, a good piece of meat, which Barakāt cooked in Syrian rather than in Arab fashion. Dates and butter in a lordly dish were not wanting, and since the women of Bereydah have learnt from the Persians the art of making leavened bread, that luxury, too, adorned our board. Altogether one might call it a very excellent meal for Ḳaseem. Of course the two Persians, Aboo-'Eysa's companions, had also been asked, for to invite one of a band and leave out the rest would be here considered the height of shabbiness; our host Aḥmed obligingly furnished cooking utensils and dishes, and was in recompense bidden to the party. Lastly, two respectable townsmen who had often honoured us with their visits were summoned to complete the convivial circle. Our Ḳ'hāwah was large enough for all, and we were in a generous humour.

Towards evening Aboo-'Eysa arrived. He entered with the easy and quiet air of a gentleman, and at once joined in conversation without the smallest embarrassment. I was much at a loss to read his riddle; his manner was not that either of a townsman or of a Bedouin, of a Christian or of a Mahometan; it partook of all, yet belonged to none; a manly face, but marked with that half-feminine delicacy of expression which, for example's sake, may be noticed in the portraits of Nelson, Rodney, and some other distinguished men of the eighteenth century; intelligent speech, yet betraying considerable ignorance on many points of school education; a negligent display of dress and bearing; a dialect which at one moment reminded me of Syria, at another of Nejed, and sometimes of the desert; above all, a total absence of all the stereotyped phrases which fill up the blanks of conversation among even the least religious Mahometans—all contributed to puzzle me regarding the real origin and character of our intended guide. My readers, previously informed of what we only learnt afterwards and by degrees, can more easily understand in the chequered history

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of Aboo-'Eysa the causes and explanation of these complicated features. Much, too, in the man was individual, and the result of natural disposition no less than of circumstances, indeed in spite of them. Certainly a roving life is no good school for probity in dealings, nor for delicate morality in private conduct. Yet Aboo-'Eysa possessed both these qualities in a degree that drew on him the admiration of many, the derision of some, and the notice of all. No one had ever heard from his lips any of those coarse jests and *double entendres* so common even among the better sort of Arabs in their freer hours, and his life was of a no less exemplary correctness than his language. Not a suspicion of libertinism had ever attached itself to him; at home, or on his journeys he was and always had been a faithful and (though wealthy) a monogamous husband. Equally known for unblemished honour in money transactions, he had never contested or delayed the payment of a debt, and his partners in business bore unanimous witness to his scrupulous fidelity. This very truthfulness of disposition led him indeed not seldom to place a too implicit confidence in the agents to whom he entrusted his affairs or his money, nor did experience of the past seem in general much to open his eyes in this respect for the future till it was too late, nor the treachery of an old friend lead him to distrust a new, though equally undeserving. An intimate acquaintance, prolonged through many and eventful months, gave us ample opportunity for observing these peculiarities in Aboo-'Eysa's conduct and character. Meanwhile I trust that my readers will excuse this minute description of the outer and inner man of one whose share in our journey was henceforth so important.

Barakāt and myself came at first to the conclusion that this singular man must be a native of Ḥoms or Ḥamah, and, by education at least, a Christian, though we could not well make out what events could have thrown him into these countries. So we internally fixed on the rising of Aleppo as the most probable occasion and date of his expatriation, and in this we were not wrong, though in other respects our conjectures went somewhat wide of the mark.

Aboo-'Eysa, too, made his observations and guesses. His early manner of life at Aleppo had rendered him pretty conversant

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with European ways and doings, and this knowledge, fortunately for us rare in Arabia, disclosed to him a glimpse of the truth veiled from others; in a word, he at once set me down for a European sight-seer in disguise, though of what particular nation he could not determine. In pursuance of this idea he began to try the ground, and after talking in a very off-hand way of Syria and Egypt, threw out certain rather hints than questions about Paris and London, about northern politics and western influence. But on these topics we were designedly brief in our answers, and unconcerned in our tone. Hereon he fell back to medicine, books, and drugs, in all which he found us what to him appeared exceedingly learned. With Ṭelāl this same manœuvre of ours had but partially succeeded. But Aboo-'Eysa was far more simple-hearted than the Shomerite prince, and without distrust or hesitation relinquished his first and truer idea, to believe us from the very bottom of his soul not Christophero Slys but learned doctors indeed, and disciples, or even rivals, of Hippocrates.

Under this impression he formed a plan which he soon began to put in practice, while we had also no motive for traversing it prematurely. It was to prevail on us to establish ourselves alongside of him in the town of Hofhoof, where we were, such was his idea, to set up an extensive and lucrative business, while he should give up his office of pilgrim leader, and join stock and profession with us in the medical line. In this view he became more eager than ever to have us for companions on the way, and to obtain our intimate friendship and entire confidence. With characteristic openness he acquainted us with his intentions, and we expressed ourselves highly gratified. All previous arrangements made between him and Barakāt were reconfirmed and our conjoint departure was settled for the nearest day possible.

So down we sat to a very joyous supper, and the conversation never flagged. Before dark, Aboo-'Eysa and the Persians took leave, to return to their camels and baggage, while the townsmen of Bereydah congratulated us on having secured so good a guide and companion; all knew him, and bore unexceptionable witness to his integrity and ability, though all equally professed themselves in the dark respecting his real origin,

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or what had been his life and pursuits before his appearance in Arabia.

Thus at rest on the main question of our journey, Barakāt and I had leisure to examine the town, and to take notice of what lay within and without its walls. Perhaps my readers will not think it loss of time to accompany us on a morning visit to the camp and market, to the village gardens and wells; such visits we often paid, not without interest and pleasure.

Warm though Ḳaseem is, its mornings, at least at this time of year (the latter part of September), were delightful. In a pure and mistless sky the sun rises over the measureless plain, while the early breeze is yet cool and invigorating, a privilege enjoyed almost invariably by Arabia, but wanting too often in Egypt on the west, and India on the east. At this hour we would often thread the streets by which we had first entered the town, and go out betimes to the Persian camp, where all was already alive and stirring. Here are ranged on the sand, baskets full of eggs and dates, flanked by piles of bread and little round cakes of white butter, bundles of firewood are heaped up close by, and pails of goat's or camel's milk abound, and amid all these sit rows of countrywomen, haggling with tall Persians or with the dusky servants of Tāj-Djehān, who in broken Arabic try to beat down the prices, and generally end by paying only double of what they ought. The swaggering broad-faced Bagdad camel-drivers, and the ill-looking sallow youths of Meshid-'Alee, every mother's son a Ḥoseyn or an 'Alee, so narrow is Shiya'ee nomenclature, stand idle everywhere, talking downright ribaldry, insulting those whom they dare, and cringing to their betters like slaves. Persian gentlemen, too, with grand hooked noses, high caps, and quaintly-cut dresses of gay patterns, saunter about discussing their grievances, or quarrelling with each other, to pass the time. For, unlike an Arab, a Persian shows at once whatever ill-humour he may feel, and has no shame in giving it utterance before whomever may be present, nor does he with the Arab consider patience to be an essential point of politeness and dignity. Not a few Bereydah townsmen are here, chatting or bartering, and Bedouins switch in hand. If you ask any chance individual among these latter what has

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brought him hither, you may be sure beforehand that the word "camel," in one or other of its forms of detail, will find place in the answer. For the Bedouins have at least twenty-five different words all in current use for a camel, according to its age, gender, and other circumstances, without mentioning the innumerable but less used and quadriliteral denominations, of which who wills may reap a copious harvest from the pages of Freytag or Golius. But there remain quite enough triliterals in every-day employ, and the camel and Bedouin are not less closely interwoven than man and horse in any Centaur of the Elgin marbles, so that the most transient intercourse with the one is sure to bring in something of the other. Criers are going up and down the camp with articles of Persian apparel, cooking-pots, and ornaments of various description in their hands, or carrying them off for higher bidding to the town. For what between the extortions of Mohanna, and the daily growing expenses of so long a sojourn at Bereydah, the Persians were rapidly coming to the end of their long purses and short wits, and had begun selling off whatever absolute necessity could dispense with as superfluous, to obtain wherewithal to buy a dish of milk or a bundle of firewood. Hence their appearance was a ludicrous mixture of the gay and ragged, of the insolence of wealth and the anxious cringe of want; they were, in short, gentlemen in very reduced circumstances, and looked what they were.

Amusing though this scene may be, Barakāt and I do not remain long in the midst of it, owing to a reasonable fear of indiscreet questions and ill-timed acquaintances. The men of Bagdad and Coufa, nay, the Shiya'ees in general, are much more inquisitive and light-blooded, to use the native phrase, than the Arabs, and have none of the courtly reserve customary among the latter when questioning strangers. More than once here we fell in with very impertinent fellows, who wished to know everything, and pretended to know much more than they really did, nor were they always easily to be got rid of, even by the broadest hint. Our best policy was therefore to keep out of their way. A cunning Turk, too, was in the caravan, and was wont to look very hard at us, and to ask, though with great courtesy of manner, questions much more easily put than

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answered. Indeed I am sure that the scoundrel saw at least two-thirds through us, and had he been elsewhere or in a different predicament, might have been a very difficult customer to deal with. The Osmanlee in general is the shrewdest of men in his conjectures, and can see round a corner as far or farther than most; but in Arabia he is, and feels himself particularly small, and our Turk had enough to do in disentangling his own skeins to have leisure left for tangling ours.

I have often wondered at the strange union the Turks present of keen intelligence and defective action. To talk with them, no men seem better to understand everything around them or more fit to rule; to witness their real practice, no men so inapt for authority; all is debased and debasing, ruinous and disloyal. A Turk in action (at least such has been my experience) has rarely either head or heart save for his own individual rapacity and sensuality; the same Turk in theory is a Metternich in statesmanship and a Wilberforce in benevolence. *Video meliora proboque*; *Deteriora sequor*, should be the device of their banner: it is the sum-total of their history. Meantime this curious but constantly-recurring association of a good head and a bad heart, of a clear understanding and depraved morals, may partly explain why the Osmanlee succeeds so regularly in imposing on those who only approach him through the medium of a diplomatic atmosphere, amid the conversational intercourse of well-dressed society, in the bureaus and saloons of Constantinople, or, better still, acting to perfection the smooth and civilized gentleman at Paris or London. Those who have chatted with the elegant Turkish agent over a bottle of claret at the hotel, or held agreeable discourse with him in a carpeted kiosk on the shores of the Bosphorus, may find it hard to bring themselves to imagine how the burning houses and violated women of Damascus, the desolated villages and butchered peasants of Sinjar and the Anṣeyreeyah, can be anyhow the work of a government headed by men so intelligent, so amicable, and above all so polite. Even so a girl refuses to believe that the nice young man who handed her down to dinner, or turned the leaves of her music-book at the piano, can be the same who plays the leg at a horse-race or shoots a "nigger" through the head. Yet such may sometimes be the

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case, and such it is very certainly with the Osmanlee. But while the diplomatic Turks are fully aware of their own extraordinary talent for imposture, they have a yet shrewder insight into the weakness of those with whom they deal, and know where and when to employ flattery or interest, to lavish promises and fair speeches, to bait the English hook with commerce, the Austrian with policy, and the French with bombast, all swallowed as readily down the hundredth time as the first, so appropriately is it administered, so well is the recipient disposed. The opiates of the sick man are for his doctors no less than for himself. But we are now in Arabia, and across the sands of the desert-ring the echoes of Turkish fine words and misrule are heard faint and far between. Let us back to Bereydah; here too is misgovernment enough, though of another kind.

Barakāt and myself have made our morning household purchases at the fair, and the sun being now an hour or more above the horizon, we think it time to visit the market-place of the town, which would hardly be open sooner. We re-enter the city gate, and pass on our way by our house door, where we leave our bundle of eatables, and regain the high street of Bereydah. Before long we reach a high arch across the road; this gate divides the market from the rest of the quarter. We enter: first of all we see a long range of butchers' shops on either side, thick hung with flesh of sheep and camel, and very dirtily kept. Were not the air pure and the climate healthy, the plague would assuredly be endemic here; but in Arabia no special harm seems to follow. We hasten on, and next pass a series of cloth and linen warehouses, stocked partly with home manufacture, but more imported; Bagdad cloaks and head-gear for instance, Syrian shawls and Egyptian slippers. Here markets follow the law general throughout the East, that all shops or stores of the same description should be clustered together, a system whose advantages on the whole outweigh its inconveniences, at least for small towns like these. In the large cities and capitals of Europe, greater extent of locality requires evidently a different method of arrangement; it might be awkward for the inhabitants of Hyde Park were no hatters to be found nearer than the Tower. But what is Bereydah or even Damascus compared, I do not say with London or

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Berlin, but with Marseilles or Manchester? However, in a crowd, it yields to neither: the streets at this time of the day are thronged to choking, and to make matters worse a huge splay-footed camel comes every now and then heaving from side to side like a lubber-rowed boat, with a long beam on his back menacing the heads of those in the way, or with two enormous loads of firewood each as large as himself, sweeping the road before him clear of men, women, and children, while the driver, high-perched on the hump, regards such trifles with the most supreme indifference, so long as he brushes his path open. Sometimes there is a whole string of these beasts, the head rope of each tied to the crupper of his precursor, very uncomfortable passengers when met with at a narrow turning.

Through such obstacles we have found or made our way, and are now amid leather and shoemakers' shops, then among copper and iron smiths, whose united clang might waken the dead or kill the living, till at last we emerge on the central town-square, not a bad one either, nor very irregular, considering that it is in Ḳaseem. About half one side is taken up by the great mosque, an edifice near two centuries old, judging by its style and appearance, but it bears on no part of it either date or inscription. This is, according to my experience, a universal rule among the constructions of Central and Eastern Arabia; neither Cufic, nor Himyarite, nor Arabic writings appear on lintel or column, a want which much disappointed me, nor could I well understand whence this dearth of memorials, especially when contrasted with the abundance of inscriptions in Ḥauran and Ṣafa, Palmyra and Babylon. Coloured writings daubed on walls and over gates are indeed common, but such inscriptions can, it is evident, be only of a few years' standing. Nor does the dearth of stone-graving come from want of skill, since architectural carving is frequent, though rude, in Nejed, while throughout 'Omān this and other ornamental arts are cultivated with no despicable success.

The minaret of this mosque is very lofty—a proof, among many others, that its date reaches farther back than the first Wahhabee domination, for the Nejdean sect does not approve of high minarets, from the all-sufficient reason that they did not exist in the time of Mahomet (true conservatives!), and

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they accordingly content themselves with a little corner turret, barely exceeding in height the rest of the roof. A crack running up one side of the tower bears witness to an earthquake said to have occurred here about thirty years since, probably the same of which we shall find traces in Ḥaṣa; I leave the full discussion of this and of other symptoms of a subterraneous volcanic agency till we arrive at the last-named district, where they are much more frequent. The arch, and consequently the vault, are here unknown; hence the pillars that upbear the mosque roof are close to each other and very numerous. They are of stone.

Another side of the square is formed by an open gallery, reminding me of those at Bologna. In its shade groups of citizens are seated discussing news or business. The central space is occupied by camels and by bales of various goods, among which the coffee of Yemen, ḥenna, and saffron, bear a large part. However, at the period of our arrival, commerce was unusually languid, owing to the war, whose occupations absorbed a considerable portion of the population itself, while they also rendered the roads unsafe for traders and travellers. All this furnished the townsmen with an additional and not groundless reason for cursing the Wahhabee, and lamenting their own folly in having first opened the door to his access among them.

From this square several diverging streets run out, each containing a market-place for this or that ware, and all ending in portals dividing them from the ordinary habitations. The vegetable and fruit market is very extensive, and kept almost exclusively by women; so are also the shops for grocery and spices. Nor do the fair sex of Bereydah seem a whit inferior to their rougher partners in knowledge of business and thrifty diligence. "Close-handedness beseems a woman no less than generosity a man," says an Arab poet, unconsciously coinciding with Lance of Verona in his comments on the catalogue of his future spouse's "conditions."

Rocksalt of remarkable purity and whiteness from western Ḳaseem is a common article of sale, and enormous flakes of it, often beautifully crystallized, lay piled up at the shop doors. Sometimes a Persian stood by, trying his skill at purchase

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or exchange, but these pilgrims were in general shy of entering the town, where, truly, they were not in the best repute. Bedouins are far less frequent here than in the streets of Ḥā'yel; indeed, henceforth they are only to be met with occasionally, and, as it were, by exception. But in compensation, well-dressed, grave-looking townsmen abound; their yellow wands of Sidr or lotus-wood in their hands, and their kerchiefs loosely thrown over their heads, without the band of white or black camel's hair so characteristic in the north. This Aḳḳal or head-band becomes rarer as we approach the centre of the Peninsula, and in the east disappears altogether.

The whole town has an aspect of old but declining prosperity. There are few new houses, but many falling into ruin. The faces, too, of most we meet are serious, and their voices in an undertone. Silk dresses are prohibited by the dominant faction, and tobacco can only be smoked within doors, and by stealth. Every now and then zealous Wahhabee missionaries from Riaḍ pay a visit of reform and preaching to unwilling auditors, and disobedience to the customs of the Nejdean sect is noticed and punished, often severely.

If, invited by its owner, we enter one of the houses, we find the interior arrangement somewhat differing from that usual in Djebel Shomer. The towns of Ḳaseem are close built, and space within the walls becomes in proportion more valuable; hence the courtyards are smaller and the rooms narrow; a second storey, too, is common here, whereas at Ḥā'yel it is a rare exception. The abundance of wood in this province renders charcoal superfluous, and the small furnaces of Djowf and Shomer have disappeared, to make room for fireplaces sunk in the floor, with a raised stone rim and dog-irons, exactly like those in use at home before coals and coal-smoke had necessitated chimney-pieces and all the modern nicety of hearths and stoves. Ghaḍa and Markh wood is piled on the irons, and the coffee, here super-excellent, for the very best of Yemen comes to Ḳaseem, is prepared on the blaze.

Conversation will, of course, run mostly on the war and its vicissitudes. Now it was that we became really acquainted with the government system of the Wahhabees in the subject

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provinces of their empire, and with the strong reaction existing everywhere. Of these points something has been already said, and we shall soon have to retouch and complete the picture.

Enough of the town; the streets are narrow, hot, and dusty; the day, too, advances; but the gardens are yet cool. So we dash at a venture through a labyrinth of byways and crossways till we find ourselves in the wide street that, like a boulevard in France, runs immediately along but inside the walls.

Here is a side gate, but half ruined, with great folding doors and no one to open them. The wall of one of the flanking towers has, however, been broken in, and from hence we hope to find an outlet on the gardens outside. We clamber in, and, after mounting a heap of rubbish, once the foot of a winding staircase, have before us a window looking right on the gardens; fortunately we are not the first to try this short cut, and the truant boys of the town have sufficiently enlarged the aperture and piled up stones on the ground outside to render the passage tolerably easy; we follow the indication, and in another minute stand in the open air without the walls. The breeze is fresh, and will continue so till noon. Before us are high palm-trees and dark shadows; the ground is velvet green with the autumn crop of maize and vetches, and intersected by a labyrinth of watercourses, some dry, others flowing; for the wells are at work.

These wells are much the same throughout Arabia, their only diversity is in size and depth, but their hydraulic machinery is everywhere alike. Over the well's mouth is fixed a cross-beam, supported high in air on pillars of wood or stone on either side, and in this beam are from three to six small wheels, over which pass the ropes of as many large leathern buckets, each containing nearly twice the ordinary English measure. These are let down into the depth, and then drawn up again by camels or asses, who pace slowly backwards and forwards on an inclined plane leading from the edge of the well itself to a pit prolonged for some distance. When the buckets rise to the verge they tilt over, and pour out their contents by a broad channel into a reservoir hard by, from which part the watercourses that irrigate the garden. The supply thus obtained is necessarily discontinuous, and much inferior to what a little

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more skill in mechanism affords in Egypt and Syria; while the awkward shaping and not unfrequently the ragged condition of the buckets themselves, causes half the liquid to fall back into the well before it reaches the brim. The creaking, singing noise of the wheels, the rush of water as the buckets attain their turning-point, the unceasing splash of their overflow dripping back into the source, all are a message of life and moisture very welcome in this dry and stilly region, and may be heard far off amid the sand-hills, a first intimation to the sun-scorched traveller of his approach to a cooler resting place.

We stroll about in the shade, hide ourselves amid the high maize to smoke a quiet pipe unobserved by prying Nejdean eyes, and then walk on till at some distance we come under a high ridge of sand clothed with Ithel, which borders the irrigation and the gardens in this direction. Curiosity leads us to climb it, though steep and sliding. From its summit we look south-west in the direction of 'Oneyzah, the whole country between is jotted over with islets of cultivation amid the sands, and far off long lines of denser shade indicate whereabouts 'Oneyzah itself is situated. Peasants with asses or camels, horsemen their long spears over their shoulders, travellers in small slowly-moving bands, appear everywhere; and if any chance to pass by us they are sure to halt for a few moments of conversation, perhaps for a pipe.

But noon draws on, and the heat increases; it were ill to remain longer in the blaze of mid-day. So we retrace our steps to the walls, and follow at a venture the town ditch till a gate appears, by which we enter and find our way home again.

Moḥammed and Ibraheem, our two *soi-disant* Meccans, were lodged in the same street with ourselves, and at no great distance. They often called, and we had to put up with much wearisome and hollow adulation on their part, whereby they sought to render our society profitable to their mendicant ends. Meanwhile behind our backs they talked of us as of infidels, and men of a very dangerous and suspected character, but with slight bad result. For if the good folks of Ḳaseem really thought us anyhow hostile to the existing order of things, such an idea went rather in our favour than the contrary.

Our travelling arrangements with Aboo-'Eysa, which were

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soon known to all, brought us also frequent visits from the Persian camp. It was highly entertaining to hear these foreigners satirize the land of the Arabs, and extol their own, whereof they invariably tried to give a most prismatic idea. Some of these gentlemen, for gentlemen they were in the scale of Eastern society, knew Arabic fairly well, thanks to frequent residence in Bagdad and its neighbourhood, and took pleasure in literary and historical research.

The military operations, if I may honour them by that name, against 'Oneyzah, afforded an ex-Indian officer another subject of observation and study. In order to become better acquainted with these proceedings, in which the town at large hardly took part, I paid frequent visits to the Nejdean war camp, then pitched to the south of the walls on the road of 'Oneyzah. Here stood an irregular collection of little black tents, often mere rags and tags, stretched out for shade on two or three poles, gipsy fashion; but the space within and around bristled with spears and swarmed with swarthy Nejdeans; their firelocks stood arranged in pyramids, much like our own manner of piling arms, before and between the lines. Each clan, each province, was encamped apart, and our own observation soon instructed us to distinguish between the quarters of the men of Aflāj, those of Sedeyr, and those of Woshem; amid the latter muskets predominated, amid the first swords and daggers, while the warriors of Sedeyr were more often armed with spears than either class of their comrades. In this camp was already gathered a certain portion of the strength of Central Nejed, but more remained behind, and the whole force of the south and east had not yet come up, besides the chosen troops of 'Aareḍ, and the artillery, for Feyṣul still deferred a decisive blow, and at the moment merely sought to weary his enemies by a protracted partisan war. No inhabitant of Bereydah would venture among or near these tents after dusk, and even in the daytime the natives of Ḳaseem kept aloof from the national and religious antipathy of the Nejdean, who waged war against tobacco no less than against 'Oneyzah, and was as bitter an enemy of all silk-wearers as of Zāmil himself, or his lieutenant Khey'yāt. When we passed by the lines, the salutations of the soldiers were

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short and sulky, and unaccompanied by any friendly invitation; we were not Nejdeans, *ergo*, we were infidels. Besides, the ill-humour of these poor fellows was augmented, and partly excused, by a very biting cause,—hunger; for they had brought with them but a poor stock of provisions, and still less money for purchase, while on the other hand they were not living here at free quarters, and the denizens of Bereydah were by no means inclined to do the handsome towards them. The Nejdeans had reckoned on fattening straightway upon the dates and plunder of 'Oneyzah, but they had reckoned without their host, and hitherto caught nothing but a Tartar; for the troops of Zāmil kept the superiority in the open field, and the relative position of besiegers and besieged was at this moment almost reversed.

One day in the afternoon we heard the alarm-cry raised from the lofty watch-tower of the city, and echoed far away in the plain from other outposts; it was a band of horsemen from 'Oneyzah, who had ventured up to the very neighbourhood of the town and were pillaging the suburbs. Mohanna came out from his counting-house to bid the rest go fighting where glory called; when lo! in a moment streets and market-place were deserted, and every townsman scampered off, not to the field of fame, but to hide himself in his house and lock the outer door, all preferring an "alibi" to the disagreeable dilemma of open disobedience if they refused to arm, or of complying with the appeal, and so having to fight precisely those on whose success their own dearest hopes were staked. However, Mohanna sent his satellites round in time to get together about forty of these reluctant warriors, who, once caught, put the best face on the matter, took their spears and matchlocks, and set out with a heroic determination *not* to fight the enemy. They were joined by a much larger band of the Nejdean soldiers, who, headed by their several chiefs, poured out from their tents with very different intentions; many of them bore, besides the weapons already mentioned, the short dagger of Yemāmah at their belts, and swords, if not always sharp, heavy, and in resolute hands. Barakāt and I climbed a hillock without the fortifications, whence we had a good view of the plain and skirmish.

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The partisans of 'Oneyzah, about half the number of their enemy, were all on horseback, and had scattered themselves here and there among the houses and gardens in the suburbs, doing no harm soever to the persons of the villagers, but busy in collecting what light booty they could lay hold of. On the approach of their assailants they gathered in front of the plantations, and sent out some twenty of theirs to the preliminaries of the fray. The Nejdeans on their side halted and drew up their line. The tactics of an Arab battle are simple, but not wholly devoid of skill. The cavalry come to the front, and provoke the engagement; while the camels and their riders, who form the main body, remain behind in reserve. When the action has once become serious, which is the case so soon as blood has been shed on either side, the camels are made to kneel down, each becoming a kind of fieldwork for two musketeers under his cover, the cavalry open out, and firing begins in good earnest, till flank attacks, or an excess of confidence on one or other side, bring on a general assault; some fight on foot, some mounted, and the mêlée continues till either party gives way. The Nejdeans distinguish themselves from the rest of their Arab countrymen by preferring slaughter to booty; they neither take nor ask for quarter, and so long as there are men to kill, pay no attention to plunder. Hence, where Nejdeans lead the battle hot work may be expected, and though six or seven hundred killed on the field may seem a trifle to Europeans accustomed to the thousands of Balaclava, or the tens of thousands of Solferino, such a number for Arabs is much, and, indeed, is supplied by Nejdean warfare alone. Elsewhere two killed and three wounded is generally the outside, much like the battles of Italian municipalities in the middle ages, nor totally dissimilar from some of the king and commonwealth frays during the first years of our own great civil broil in the seventeenth century. The comprehensive progress of our age has now extended itself, *inter alia*, to the art of killing, and we justly despise the retail proceedings of our ancestors. But the Arabs in their backward simplicity continue to set human blood at a higher price than it seems to fetch in modern Europe. I return to the skirmish before us.

The horsemen of Bereydah answer the challenge of the enemy

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by galloping forward some one way, some another, but never straight to their opponents; while the Nejdeans, having for the most only camels under them, are obliged to await the results. Three or four of them are, however, on horseback, and these naturally take the lead. A very pretty display of equestrian skill follows, with a dropping fire of matchlocks; but the men of Ḳaseem, whether from 'Oneyzah or Bereydah, understand each other, and have made up their mind beforehand that neither bullet nor spear-point of theirs shall hurt their countrymen. So they wheel round and round like swallows over a lake, till the Nejdeans loose patience, and advance their whole line. Then the warriors of 'Oneyzah, seeing the business take a serious turn, and that they are likely to be immediately outnumbered, disappear one by one among the palm-groves in their rear, keeping a good show to the last, but putting the trees between themselves and their foe long before the old-fashioned guns can send a ball within reach of them. Hereon the fray ends, for want of an enemy, and the heroes of Bereydah amuse themselves with a sham fight and much careering and hallooing on their way back to the town, which they enter after about four hours' absence, with "happily no lives lost," as the next morning paper would have it, did morning papers here exist. On their return the hidden townsmen suddenly reappear, and the streets are filled as usual.

Our evenings passed usually in very pleasant guise; after supper, invariably here and elsewhere throughout Arabia at sunset, we would betake ourselves to the flat house-roof, along with Aboo-'Eysa and other acquaintances from camp or town, and there smoke and talk for hours, or listen to the call to night-prayers from the Persian tents, sounding melodious and full among the harsh voices of the Arabs. I know not whether any of my readers labour under the agreeable delusion that Arabia is a land of song; perhaps no country in the world has less harmony to boast, unless, indeed, it be China; but I have never had the good fortune of hearing a Chinese performer, only they do not look musical. However, I have heard Turks, Persians, Indians of all sorts, and negroes sing, not to mention Syrians, Armenians, Greeks, and the like; and can bear witness to them that one and all they far surpass the sons

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of Ḳaḥṭān or Ismael in this accomplishment, both for voice and ear, for instrumental and for vocal music. Not that my friends the Arabs are of the same opinion; on the contrary, they imagine themselves genuine successors of Orpheus, and often deafen the too-courteous listener with screeches meant for airs, and torture him with nasalities supposed to be harmonious. The worst of all are the Bedouins; and the enthusiasm of even a French philo-Oriental traveller would be hard tried by a nomade howling out at his ear "Aboo-Zeyd," the favourite Bedouin chaunt, on a hot day. For the townsmen they are little better, and in all cases the greatest favour to be begged of an Arab vocalist is his silence.

On the other hand, the Persians have commonly good voices, and a true feeling of harmony. Their music, if not equal to the European standard, is at least pleasing, though, like most Asiatic melodies, somewhat melancholy. Their neighbours of Bagdad, indeed the inhabitants of the entire valley of the Tigris from Baṣrah to Diar-Bekr, partake more or less of their ear and voice, and a Bagdad singer will often make a large fortune in distant towns. A dash of music is to be found in Syria also, especially among the Damascenes, and next after them among the denizens of the sea-coast at Ṣeyda, 'Akka, and the rest. The Turks are tolerably good songsters, but their airs are in general livelier, and approach nearer to the European.

In requital, if the Arab voice be not adapted, and it most certainly is not, to singing, it is admirably well qualified for all the tones of public speaking, reading aloud, and the entire range of conversation and eloquence. Clear and sonorous, it is a powerful though not a sweet-toned instrument, and those who possess it know well how to put it to its best. Besides, it has here a remarkable advantage, elsewhere denied it, namely, that of being united with the fullest and completest pronunciation of a language which is one of the most copious, if not the most copious, in the universe. Whether in the Ḥejāz or in Yemen, much more in Egypt and Syria, most at Bagdad and Moṣool, the current speech is very incorrect, defective, clipped, and corrupted, in desinence and in accent, in elocution and in phraseology. It is not a dialect, but a mere degeneration, phonic and grammatical. Even those whom study and education have

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enabled to avoid low provincialisms and downright inaccuracies, exhibit in their public speech and private conversation much of that meagreness and constraint which attends whatever is artificial, and there is little pleasure in listening to them. But in Djebel Shomer and the whole of Upper and Central Nejed the contrary finds place, and here the smallest and raggedest child that toddles about the street lisps in the correctest book-Arabic (to use an inexact denomination) that ever De Sacy studied or Sibawee'yah professed. The question is sometimes asked, "Is the Arabic of the Coran and of the golden age of Arabian literature in general yet a spoken language, or was it ever really so?" The answer is affirmative: it certainly was a spoken language, for it is yet so in the districts above mentioned; nor only spoken, but popular, vulgar even, at least in the etymological sense of that word. But the choicest display of Arab elocution is in the public recital of the Coran, and in this the Wahhabees bear away the palm. Religious enthusiasm and a scrupulosity worthy of a Jewish rabbi at a Saturday reading of the Pentateuch, gives force to every consonant, depth to every vowel, and precision to every accent and inflexion, till the hearer, even though an "infidel" at heart, ceases to wonder at the influence exercised by these singular rehearsals over the Arab believer. For whatever merit the Coran can claim lies wholly and merely in its remarkable eloquence and extreme purity of diction; good sense there is little, and reasoning is not to be expected. Hence a translation, however skilful, is simply intolerable; and few, I should think, have found their way through Sale's Coran from beginning to end. But the very repetitions, monotonous formulæ, and abrupt transitions, which drive an English or a French reader to despair, add in the original Arabic to the force and rhythmical emphasis of the text, and are felt accordingly by its Eastern auditors.

To come to details: the lands where Arabic is at the present day spoken precisely as it was in the age of Mahomet, or even earlier, with whatever grammar and enunciation can supply to give freshness and perfection to its exactitude, are Djebel Shomer, Ḳaseem, Sedeyr, Woshem, and the northern half of 'Aareḍ. Southward of these limits another and a different form

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begins to prevail, I mean the Ḳaḥṭānic variety of tongue, which by regular gradations gains on the more classic or Ismaelitic dialect of the centre, till it wholly supplants it in 'Omān, where we find a modification of the Arabic language represented by the ante-Islamitic poems of the south, and which now is, and probably always was, the speech of the Yemantic Arab branch, though at present banished the Yemen, or at least its coast. In certain districts of Yemen, Wadi Nejrān for instance, and perhaps in Ḥaḍramaut, traces of it seem yet to exist, but mixed with the idiom of Ḥejāz and the sea-shore. How all this was brought about I will endeavour subsequently to explain.

Yet I cannot return to my narrative without a brief remark on the strange mistake of some learned Orientalists, who have imagined that the delicate niceties of Arab grammar are the inventions of comparatively recent philologists, and consequently with little or no foundation in the language itself. And first in a general way I would suggest that rules do not create facts, but explain and methodize them; and that systems are not causes, but the commentaries on things in existence. However, in addition to this general argument, two special reasons leave no room for doubt that the "Tenween" was in use long before Ebn-Khālid, and the "Naṣb" before Zamaskharee. The first is, that the whole metre and rhyme of innumerable poems, the original literature of Arabia, and remounting to the earliest historical and even mythical date, entirely depend on the correct application of these rules, not then indeed rules, but usages. He who would try to read aloud the productions of Shanfara' or 'Amroo'l-Ḳeys without observing "refaa'" and "djezm," "wasl," and "hamza," would be equally at a loss to discover in their odes either measure or rhythm, as he who should translate Pope or Horace into German, and then look for the alcaics of the one or the pentametral scansion and coupled rhymes of the other. Now we know from multiplied testimony that the early Arabs spoke as they versified, and that among them the poetical and the current language were one and the same; in short, that the difference between rhyming and talking lay only in the arrangement of the words, not in the words themselves. These rules, or rather the facts they indicate, are therefore of an antiquity at least equal to the staves in

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which they are embodied—that is, long prior to the grammarians of Coufa and Baṣrah. A second and equally conclusive proof of the anteriority of the spoken to the written grammar is its actual and living existence among high and low, educated and ignorant, throughout wide-spread populations and remote districts where the very names of the philological purists of the north were never heard, and where peasants and camel-drivers can only so speak because their fathers so spoke before them, while their fathers learnt in turn from their fathers, and thus up to the very origin of the nation and of its language. The isolation of these localities has preserved them from foreign corruptions of phrase and word; but it alike precludes all supposition of after-teaching and imported book-lore. On the contrary, when the same language, overspreading lands to north, east, and west, where Coptic or Syrian, Persian or Curdish, Turkish or Berber, had hitherto prevailed, lost in uncongenial mouths its original precision and perfection, and was now alloyed with the Iranic vocabulary, now distorted by Aramæan analogies, then, but not till then, came the necessity of study and rules, of schools and professors, to fix the standard and save the original type from total obliteration. Thus what had at first been nature became art, and fluent speech crystallized into books and grammars.

Here at Bereydah and elsewhere we often discussed similar topics with the companions of our travelling days, nor were the like subjects above the understanding of our town friends, nor without interest for them. Should this book present new ideas, or views having a greater semblance of harmony and verisimilitude than may have been before presented upon Arabia, it is but justice in me to say that most of these lucky hits, if indeed they be so, are the offspring of Shomer and Nejed, of Ḥaṣa and 'Omān, where I found and heard them; very often only "telling the tale as 'twas told to me."

But our Bereydah evenings were not exclusively grammatical, and many other points of wider interest were canvassed in our quiet circle while seated under the "heaven over heaven" of an Arab night, and hearkening to the shrill voices of the town, or the distant and more harmonious call of the Persian Mu'eḍḍin. Government and religion, medicine and commerce,

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passed in review, plans and schemes, some already realized, some destined to lasting abortiveness, till the late hour sent our friends back to their houses to sleep, and we remained to pass our night on the cooler terrace.

The zodiacal light, always discernible in these transparent skies, but now at its full equinoctial display, would linger cone-like in the west for full three hours after sunset, perfectly distinct in colour, shape, and direction from the last horizontal glimmer of daylight; while its re-appearance in the east long before morning could only be confounded by inexperience with the early dawn. Shooting stars glided over the vault, yet not more numerous I think than in Europe, did the clouds and mists of our northern climate permit them to be equally visible there. All night long, the watchmen on the towers cried and answered at intervals, now "Allahu Akbar," now the password of their province, and the city slept dark below with its silent groves and sands around. Remembrances of India and Syria, of Europe and home, now seemed as if belonging to another planet, or the indistinct unreality of a dream; while Arabia and the Ḳaseem stood out in the circumscribed solidity of actual existence. Now the semblances are reversed; yet at that time, when thinking on the waste of intervening deserts and seas yet to traverse, I hardly expected that it would again be so. *In memoriam!*

Early in the morning the ringing of mortars and pestles in the neighbouring dwellings, where each householder was engaged in preparing his morning coffee, would awaken us to find Aboo-'Eysa already risen and busily pounding away in the courtyard below, where the flickering gleam of the wood-fire mingled with the grey twilight of dawn. No Arab, however good his condition, thinks himself above coffee making; indeed it is more fashionable for a gentleman to prepare in person this beverage than to leave the operation to an inferior or slave.

During our prolonged delay at Bereydah we occasionally left the town for a day's visit to the neighbouring villages of 'Aṣḳha, Muḍneb, and others, the better to study rural life in Ḳaseem. I have already sufficiently described a country dwelling in what I related of our day's repose in the suburb of Doweyr under the arbour and roof-tree of Mubārek, and thus I need not again enter into details touching the houses of the peasantry, for they

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are all very uniform and on the same pattern, differing only in size. The villages themselves are clean and pleasant, not unlike those of Jafnapatam and Ceylon; and what between shade and water, cool enough considering the southerly latitude. Their inhabitants appear in general to be much in the condition which the wise man of old desired for himself when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches:" few have superfluity, yet none are in absolute want. Here the soil belongs in full right to its cultivators, not to the government, as in Turkey; nor is it often in the hands of large proprietors like the Zemindars of India and the wealthier farmers of England. On the other hand, the excessive Wahhabee taxes, if they do not wholly check, at least discourage, the extension of agriculture. The tenth of the produce of the land in dates, corn, maize, and the like, is taken by the government in way of a regular duty, while extraordinary levies also, amounting sometimes to one-third of the harvest value, are repeatedly imposed, above all on the occasion of a "Djihād" or "sacred war," that is, of any war, for the Wahhabees are a sacred nation, being the genuine "little flock everywhere spoken against" of Islam, and the real orthodox believers, and no mistake; hence all their wars are sacred too, so that none but heretics or infidels, or those who would wish to be held for such and treated accordingly, can refuse contribution to their pious campaigns.

Cattle, that is, camels and sheep, are often bred and pastured here, but on a smaller scale than in Shomer, owing to the greater predominance of cultivated over uncultivated land. Yet they form considerable part of the country wealth, and suffice not for home use only, but for export also; though the sheep are less esteemed by foreign purchasers than the mountain breed of Ṭoweyḳ. Horses too are reared and exported east and north; they resemble in every respect those of Djebel Shomer, and do not pass for real "Nejdees." Cows and oxen, none or next to none; buffaloes, still less. The herdsmen and shepherds are sometimes villagers and sometimes Bedouins; but the former class has here outgrown in number and importance the latter.

The duty levied on pasture cattle by the government is about a twentieth of their value; and so far the shepherd in

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Ḳaseem is better off than the ploughman or gardener. But a special town duty on meat makes the tax on beasts almost as heavy in the long run as that exacted on the vegetable kingdom. Money also is taxed, one in forty; and since it might be difficult for the duty-collector to get a sight of the purse itself, an estimate is made on the average income of each merchant and trader, and they have to pay accordingly. Moreover, members of the commercial class, whether subjects or foreigners, must furnish an import duty on their wares when brought within the frontiers; the rate is about four shillings a load, a heavy sum because levied on goods of much more bulk in general than costliness. Hence trading fares no better than agriculture or cattle breeding. To all this government absorption, we must add the occasional items of presents, bribes, local extortions, and not unfrequently downright oppression; after which I leave my readers to judge whether the advantages of the highest dogmatic purity are worth the price paid for them in the more tangible goods of this lower world. The non-Wahhabee Arabs would, I fear, answer in the negative. Lastly, the frequency of war, and the obligation of not only contributing to its sinews, but of personally bearing art and part in it, hastens the decay of the province.

Yet experience shows that these evils or most of them might be borne with were they inflicted by native chiefs and an indigenous government. It is the title of foreigners, and of foreigners who pursue a settled and persevering system of engrossing all posts, all authority, all influence, and ultimately all wealth, that renders the Wahhabee so particularly odious in this and in the other subject regions. Many a man will suffer his own right hand to cut off his left, who will not bear the prick of a needle from the hand of another. Lastly, the enforcement of a despotic creed and servile observance of a ceremonial bondage, respecting which the Arabs might well say with St. James at Jerusalem, that "neither we nor our fathers were able to bear it," aggravate fiscal and political oppression by its continual and purposeless interference. The ecclesiastical teasings of Laud scarcely did less to bring on the Great Rebellion than the ship-money of Strafford; and the surplice and collect were perhaps even more hateful to the Scotch than

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the extension of the royal prerogative, or the violation of parliamentary privileges. Here the race of Meṭow'waa's and Meddey'yeeyahs, of preachers and zelators, thrives on the involuntary contributions of a people that detests them, and taxes odious in themselves are rendered yet more so when exacted in the name of religion and of God. "To burden all who don't eat meat with a costly meat establishment," is a very unpopular, and for that alone, not to mention other reasons, a very unwise measure, even though enforced by the high authority of Feyṣul-ebn-Sa'ood or of the bishop of Ferns, whether in Nejed or nearer home.

With all this my readers must not suppose the Wahhabee government to be an unmixed wrong, or that it offers no good soever to counterbalance or to palliate its manifold disadvantages. Bad though it certainly is, it was preceded, at least in many places, by worse—by utter anarchy, by the feuds of local chieftains, by civil wars among townsmen, and the unrestrained insolence of the Bedouins. Robber and spoiler too the Nejdean ruler is, yet with this redeeming feature, that he reserves all the robbing and spoiling to himself, and suffers no one else, nomade or citizen, to open a private account on his own score. The 'Ajmān, 'Oteybah, Meṭeyr, Benoo-Khālid, and other Bedouin clans, were down to the last century no less dreaded and destructive here than their brethren the 'Anezah are yet in Syria and the northern desert, and they rendered travelling through Nejed no safer a business than it is at the present day between Ḥomṣ and Tadmor or Sakhneh. But under Wahhabee rule the wayfarer who traverses Ḳaseem, Sedeyr, Woshem, and all the other eight provinces of the central empire, will meet but few Bedouins, nor need ever fear those few; merchant and villager, townsman and stranger, are alike freed from predatory inroad and road-side assault; and so far as these rovers are concerned, commerce and cultivation may proceed uninterrupted and unimpaired. No local chief, unless perchance he be one of the Nejdean proconsuls, can trample on the rights of the subject, no village can plunder the gardens or cut down the fruit-trees of its neighbouring hamlet. The whole patent of oppression, general and individual, is reserved to the government, and to the government alone; it is a sacred monopoly, a

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New Forest on which no one may poach with impunity. Hence when the inhabitants of Riaḍ in my presence felicitated the Persian Nā'ib, Moḥammed-'Alee, on his safe arrival among them at the capital, and contrasted the bygone perils of Nejdean travelling with the security of the present day, the old Shirazee fox turned to me with a knowing wink, and said, but in Hindoostanee, and in an undertone, "Formerly there were fifty robbers here, now there is only one; but that one is an equivalent for the fifty;" a remark which recalled to my mind the "ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant" of the Roman annalist.

Meanwhile the comparison between the Wahhabee and the Turkish administrations (and I believe the Persian too, whatever Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee could boast) is decidedly in favour of the former; inasmuch as a government which though ultimately ruinous to its subjects yet suffers no one else to ruin them, is better than one which, while itself wasting and desolating the people, gives free leave also to everybody else who has a mind to join in the work, nay, invites and incites them. Sincerity, too, claims respect; and if fanaticism be bad as a ruler, it is worse perhaps when a tool: now with the Wahhabee it is the former, with the Turk the latter. In juxtaposition with the Ottoman, the Nejdean has no need of whitewashing, he becomes positively fair by the contrast. Many inferences might hence be drawn; but I leave them to the intelligence of my readers.

While on one of our suburban excursions we took the direction of 'Oneyzah, but found it utterly impossible to arrive within its walls; so we contented ourselves with an outside and distant view of this large and populous town; the number of its houses, and their size, judging by the overtopping summits that marked out the dwelling of Zāmil and his family, far surpassed anything in Bereydah. The outer fortifications are enormously thick and the girdle of palm-trees between them and the town affords a considerable additional defence to the latter. For all I could see, there is little stonework in the constructions, they appear almost exclusively of unbaked bricks; yet even so they are formidable defences for Arabia. The whole country around and whatever lay north-east towards Bereydah was more or less ravaged by the war; and we were blamed by our friends

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as very rash in having ventured thus far; in fact, it was a mere chance that we did not fall in with skirmishers or plunderers; and in such a case the military discipline of Ḳaseem would hardly have ensured the safety of a third and unarmed party.

Two whole weeks had thus passed, a third began, and Aboo-'Eysa was not yet ready to start, nor were the reasons which he at first assigned for this delay wholly satisfactory. At last the true cause of his dilatoriness came to light, and it was of a character to be accepted without blame or necessity for excuse.

Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee, the Persian representative at Meshid 'Alee, and now entrusted with the headmanship of the national pilgrimage, had written "in Arabic and Persian," to Riaḍ, announcing the flight of Aboo-Boṭeyn, and the conduct of Mohanna, and thereon proposing to pay in his own person a visit to the capital, where he would state by word of mouth grievances too many and too serious to be entrusted to pen and ink. Feyṣul would most gladly have dispensed with the offered interview, but he feared lest the Persian should take occasion of a refusal to come to a total rupture, the result of which must be to deprive Nejed of its annual perquisites from the passage of the pilgrims. Accordingly he sent word to Mohanna to provide Moḥammed-'Alee with an escort for his journey to Riaḍ, and to make his arrangements with the other Persians after a manner to ensure their safe return home.

During the interval of these letters to and fro, the governor of Bereydah had wrung out of his Shiya'ee guests a sum amounting on the most moderate calculation to 1,600*l.* sterling, and could hardly now expect further subsidies. He had thus no great interest in detaining them any longer; whereas to furnish them with a guide was precisely a handle left in his power for obtaining an additional gain, by a charge laid on the profits attached to such a service. But he was not over-disposed to gratify the Nā'ib (for such was the official title of Moḥammed-'Alee, and by it we will henceforth designate him for brevity's sake) both with guides and beasts of burden, since these he could hardly have supplied otherwise than gratis. So he observed on that point of his instructions a prudent

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silence, and resolved to oblige the Persian grandee to shift for himself.

The Nā'ib was now in somewhat the same predicament as ours had been, seeking for companions and finding none; for even the guarantee of a royal invitation was insufficient to remove all doubts touching what reception he might meet in Riaḍ; nor were the men of Ḳaseem ambitious of a visit to the Wahhabee capital. At last he had recourse for counsel and help to Aboo-'Eysa, with whom he had been on very good terms throughout their previous journey. This latter was willing enough to undertake the office of bear-leader, but he had not then by him enough beasts of burden to suffice for the occasion. The Nā'ib indeed possessed his own dromedary, but he was accompanied by two servants, 'Alee and Ḥasan, both natives of Meshid, besides the Ḥajj Ḥoseyn, a sort of head-muleteer from the neighbourhood of Bagdad. All these were dismounted, and required camels or dromedaries; Aboo-'Eysa had but four, two of which he had already engaged in our service, nor was he a man to retract a previous promise. However he was loth to lose the opportunity of an addition to his band, and accordingly he set about devising means to procure supplementary quadrupeds; but his funds were at a low ebb, hence he had to borrow, and the transaction lasted many days.

Meanwhile the Nā'ib, as was natural, introduced himself to us. He was a thorough Persian, and full sixty years old or even more, but in full vigour of body, and, had he not been an habitual opium-chewer, of mind too; his beard and whiskers were so carefully dyed with ḥenna and black, that at a little distance he might almost have passed for a man of forty. He spoke Arabic badly, Turkish somewhat better, and Hindoostanee remarkably well, for he had been many years agent of the Persian government at Hyderabad in the Deccan; very witty and enjoying a joke, verbal or practical, shrewd from long conversance with affairs, though, like most Persians of my acquaintance, not difficult to dupe; talkative and gay, but occasionally yielding to violent and most indecorous fits of passion; a devout Shiya'ee and adorer of 'Alee and the Mahdee, at the mention of whose name I have seen him prostrate himself full length on the ground; in a word, he was a "character," and the circumstances

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of the journey brought him out in every light and every point of view. His attendants had nothing to distinguish them except their coarseness, their noisy Shiya'ee fanaticism, and their unmeasured declamations against Arabs and Wahhabees, the whole in the corrupt slang dialect of Bagdad and Meshid, presenting a curious contrast with the absolute purity and minute correctness of the language spoken around them. We now became fully acquainted with these men, our destined fellow-travellers to Riad, and our next-door neighbours there; their visits helped us to pass a time otherwise tedious from hope deferred.

September closed, and then finally Mohanna selected a guide to lead the Tāj-Djehān and the associates of her pilgrimage to the banks of Euphrates. The Persians duly paid the price of their deliverance, and departed on the north-western track, having about twenty-five days' march before them, and slender provisions. However, during my stay at Bagdad in the following spring, I was happy to learn that they had all at last arrived in safety.

Aboo-'Eysa too, after many delays inseparable from borrowing, found the desired camels, and we now prepared ourselves for the road. But before starting, an unlucky incident took place, sufficient in itself to reveal the weak point of our over-confiding guide. One evening that Aboo-'Eysa with his Persian friends were at supper in our house, Habbāsh, an ill-conditioned mulatto servant whom he had taken in tow more from compassion than anything else when leaving Medinah, profited by his master's absence from camp to elope, carrying off with him in his flight Aboo-'Eysa's best cloak, some money, and last, not least, the large brass mortar for pounding coffee. Now the mortar was a remarkably fine one, of excellent metal, and used to give out a very melodious bell-like ring when at work, and hence its owner was particularly fond of it, and seldom left it idle. Nor was it easy, or even possible, to find such another one at Bereydah; and to make matters worse, the loss occurred just when we had a ten days' journey before us, and stood more in need of aromatic solace than ever; nor had the Nā'ib any similar utensil among his baggage, being, like most of his nation, not a coffee but a tea drinker. The loss of the aforesaid mortar was accordingly "the most unkindest cut of all," and

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Aboo-'Eysa swore that he would have it back at any price. So he sent off two or three friends to hunt after the fugitive Habbāsh and his booty, and then went on the chase himself. But after two days lost in vain research news came that the thief had been seen on the Medinah road towards Ḥenākeeyah, and so far advanced that no hope remained of catching either him or the mortar. Fortunately I carried about with me a small brazen implement wherein to pound "poisoned poisons" for my patients; this we now washed out carefully, and applied it to more social uses during our way to the capital, where at last Aboo-'Eysa found a supplement if not an equivalent for his loss.

When all was ready for the long-expected departure, it was definitely fixed for the 3rd of October, a Friday, I think, at nightfall. Since our first interview Barakāt and myself had not again presented ourselves before Mohanna, except in chance meetings, accompanied by distant salutations in the street or market-place; and we did not see any need for paying him a special farewell call. Indeed, after learning who and what he was, we did our best not to draw his grey eye on us, and thereby escaped some additional trouble and surplus duties to pay, nor did any one mention us to him. At star-rise we bade our host and householder Aḥmed a final adieu, and left the town with Aboo-'Eysa for our guide.

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CHAPTER VIII

From Bereydah to Riaḍ

The portion of this world which I at present
Have taken up to fill the present sermon,
Is one of which there's no description recent;
The reason why is easy to determine—*Byron*

TWO ROUTES FROM BEREYDAH TO RIAḌ—WE TAKE THE LONGER—CAMELS AND DROMEDARIES—NIGHT TRAVELLING—ROWEYḌAH—COUNTRY HOSPITALITY—UPLANDS—ROUTE ACROSS THE NEFOOD—WĀSIṬ—ITS INHABITANTS—VALLEY OF ZULPHAH—NIGHT AT ZULPHAH—GAZELLES—A ṢOLIBAH GIRL AND THE NĀ'IB—DJEBEL ṬOWEYḴ, ITS EXTENT, CHARACTER, DIRECTION OF ITS STREAMS, CLIMATE—VILLAGE OF GHĀṬ—ARAB ETYMOLOGY—SEDEYR HOSPITALITY, CONVERSATION, TONE OF SOCIETY—THE AḴABAH—PLATEAU OF ṬOWEYḴ—A STORM—MEJMAA'—HISTORY OF THE SEDEYREE FAMILY—'ABD-EL-MAḤṢIN AND HIS CASTLE—TOBACCO—ROUTE ON THE PLATEAU—A RUNNING STREAM—DJELĀJIL AND ROWḌAH—MEṬEYR AND ḴAḤṬĀN BEDOUINS—TOWEYM—THE TOWN, ITS CHARACTER AND INHABITANTS—INSECTS AND REPTILES IN CENTRAL ARABIA—ḤAFR—THOMEYR—AN ADVENTURE IN THE VILLAGE—ṢOLIBAH LAD—A GARDEN—ROUTE BY THENEEYAT-'AṬĀLAH—ṢADIḴ—WOODED COUNTRY—HARES—ḤOOLAH—LOCAL ADVANTAGES OF THE WAHHABEE RULE—ḤOREYMELAH—ITS CASTLE—IBRAHEEM BASHA—HISTORY OF MOḤAMMED-EBN-'ABD-EL-WAHHĀB—HIS SYSTEM—HOW FAR ACCORDANT WITH MAHOMET AND THE CORAN—HIS LIFE AT DAMASCUS AND 'EYĀNAH—HIS FIRST PREACHING—EBN-MUFLIḴ INTERFERES—FLIGHT TO ḌEREY'EEYAH—EBN-SA'OOD AND THE WAHHABEE—FIRST WARS, AND SUCCESS—DOWNFALL OF 'EYĀNAH AND THE MA'AMMERS—CONQUEST OF YEMĀMAH—DEFEAT OF 'ARĀR—PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE WAHHABEE—HIS FAMILY—FROM ḤOREYMELAH TO SEDOOS—FRONTIER OF 'AAREḌ—UPLANDS—WADI ḤANEEFAH—RUINS OF 'EYĀNAH—ROWḌAH—HISTORY OF MOSEYLEMAH AND SHEJĀḤ—BATTLE OF ROUḌAH—DEATH OF MOSEYLEMAH—CAPITULATION OF RIAḌ—CONDUCT OF SHEJĀḤ—WADI ḤANEEFAH CONTINUED—MALḴA—RUINS OF ḌEREY'EEYAH—GARDEN OF 'ABD-ER-RAḤMĀN—ROAD TO RIAḌ.

Our party assembled close under the walls by the eastern gate, a little to the north of the watch-tower, and not far from the tents of Moḥammed, son of Feyṣul. The Nā'ib now came up with his three companions; Barakāt, Aboo-'Eysa, and myself made three more; Ḥoseyn-el-Baṣree, a gay young merchant from the town whose name he bore, and the two Meccans,

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who, weary of ill luck at Bereydah, had determined to try the doubtful generosity of Feyṣul, completed the number of travellers, ten in all. Besides, as the first stages of our march might possibly expose us to a chance meeting with the predatory bands of 'Oneyzah, Mohanna had, after much demur, furnished the Nā'ib with a body-guard of three or four matchlock men, who were to accompany us up to the frontiers of Ḳaseem.

Two roads lay before us. The shorter, and for that reason the more frequented of the two, led south-east-by-east through Woshem and its capital Shaḳra, and thence up Wadi Ḥaneefah to Riaḍ. But this track passed through a district often visited at the present moment by the troops of 'Oneyzah and their allies, and hence our companions, not over-courageous for the most, were afraid to follow it. Another road, much more circuitous, but farther removed from the scene of military operations, led north-east to Zulphah, and thence entered the province of Sedeyr, which it traversed in a south-easterly or southern direction, and thus reached the 'Aareḍ. Our council of war resolved on the latter itinerary, nor did we ourselves regret a roundabout which promised to procure us the sight of much that we might scarcely have otherwise an opportunity of visiting. Barakāt and I were mounted on two excellent dromedaries of Aboo-'Eysa's stud; the Nā'ib was on a lovely grey she-camel, with a handsome saddle, crimson and gold. The Meccans shared between them a long-backed black beast; the rest were also mounted on camels or dromedaries, since the road before us was impracticable for horses, at any rate at this time of year.

It may be well to make my readers aware once for all of the fact that the popular home idea of a dromedary having two humps, and a camel one, or *vice versâ* (for I have forgotten which of the animals is supplied with a duplicate boss in coloured picture books), is a simple mistake. The camel and the dromedary in Arabia are the same identical genus and creature, excepting that the dromedary is a high-bred camel, and the camel a low-bred dromedary, exactly the same distinction which exists between a race-horse and a hack; both are horses, but the one of blood, the other not. The dromedary is the race-horse of

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his species, thin, elegant (or comparatively so), fine-haired, light of step, easy of pace, and much more enduring of thirst than the woolly, thick-built, heavy-footed, ungainly, and jolting camel. But both and each of them have only one hump, placed immediately behind their shoulders, where it serves as a fixing-point for the saddle or burden. Owing to this similarity, they are often confounded in the common appellations of "Baa'reer" or "Nôḳ," male or female camels, though yet more often the dromedary enjoys his special title of "hejeen" or "ḍolool." For the two-humped beast, it exists indeed, but it is neither an Arab dromedary nor camel; it belongs to the Persian breed, called by the Arabs "Bakhtee" or Bactrian. Perhaps there may be a specimen of it at the Zoological Gardens, and thither who chooses may go and have a look at it, only let him not profane the name of "dromedary" by applying it to the clumsy, coarse-haired, upland Persian beast before him. To see real live dromedaries, my readers must, I fear, come to Arabia, for these animals are not often to be met with elsewhere, not even in Syria; and whoever wishes to contemplate the species in all its beauty must prolong his journey to 'Omān, the most distant corner of the Peninsula, and which is for dromedaries what Nejed is for horses, Cachemire for sheep, and Thibet, I believe, for bulldogs.

Night had fairly set in, but the moon, now in her second quarter, shone bright, and promised us yet seven or eight hours of her lamp. Canopus glittered in all his splendour to the south, and Orion was to rise before long. Off we started at a round pace, and trotted over the sand-hills that girdle in Bereydah, now up, now down, and then on by moonshine among bushes and grass, over hillock and plain, with at times a mass of dark foliage in sight, to indicate where stood some village, but we halted at none. The night air soon cooled into a chill; our party was not at first a very cheerful one. The Nā'ib had parted from Mohanna in a fit of ill-humour, such as an opium-eating Persian alone can display; his attendants were sulky to keep in tune with their master; the two Meccans could not decide between them which should ride their single camel and which should walk, and by their frequent changes of method reminded me of the farmer and his son going with their

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ass to market, only with less equability of temper; and Aboo-'Eysa was making ineffectual attempts to enliven the party, though he, too, had not wholly recovered from the annoyance consequent on the disappearance of his servant and coffee-mortar. The Nejdeans kept aloof, looking on us conjointly as a pack of reprobates, whom they would more gladly plunder than escort. Lastly, Barakāt and myself were not without anxiety touching what might lie before us at Riaḍ, so dismal had been the tales recounted to us in Ḳaseem about the Wahhabee capital, its rulers and people. Nor were we over-pleased to have the backbiting Meccans in our company.

But sad or merry, we were now embarked, and on we went in speed and silence. At last the moon lowered, reddened, and then obliquely sank, while we began to hope for the rest and sleep that all stood much in need of. However, Aboo-'Eysa, who preferred encamping in the neighbourhood of habitations to a desert bivouac, despised our expostulations, and made us push on in spite of weariness, till about an hour before day-break, and just at the period of night when the darkness is darkest, we suddenly found ourselves on the edge of deep water-channels and standing maize, while high walls loomed through the obscurity beyond. It was Roweyḍah, a small village, but well provided with irrigation, and the gardens before us were the private property of Mohanna, who had planted and arranged them during his presidency in the province. Here we were to halt, and try what hospitality the inhabitants would show.

Some one way, some another, for between darkness and drowsiness we went at it like drunken men, after much shouting and splashing we floundered through and out of the watery labyrinth, and reached the high village gate. There we entered, and discovered what looked like a castle on the one side, with an open space on the other. In this latter we flung ourselves down on the ground without further questions, to sleep, and I hope that Aboo-'Eysa looked after the baggage, for we certainly did not.

Two hours of morning nap after a long night journey are equal to six hours at any other time. The risen sun awoke us, and we began to rub our eyes and reconnoitre our position. We had been sleeping by the side of a small tank; hard by

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were low built houses and court-walls; on the other hand our castle, which now turned out to be the chief's, or rather the head farmer's abode, but spacious and lofty enough for a baron of the feudal times. We washed hands, faces, and feet (for our dress list, it is needless to say, did not number those Europeanized articles stockings among its items), and made straight for the Ḳ'hāwah of this princely dwelling, sure to find morning coffee in function. The Nā'ib seated himself in due state near the master of the house, while we, entirely eclipsed by the grandeurs of a Persian ambassador on his way to Feyṣul, modestly took our places lower down. Many villagers came in to stare at the strangers, and to partake of coffee on their account. The meeting terminated by an invitation of all to breakfast in the garden belonging to Mohanna, for the head man here was also country bailiff to the Bereydah governor.

A very pretty garden it was—fig-trees and orange-trees, pomegranates and peaches, with stone-rimmed watercourses and tanks, and walks among the shrubbery arranged with more taste and symmetry than Arabs usually display in their horticultural efforts. Carpets were spread under an overshadowing group of palms, and while the more solid repast was preparing, melons of all shapes and sizes were piled up before us for a whet. The Nā'ib produced a tea-urn with its complete appurtenances, not other than might have beseemed an English drawing-room, besides a beautiful Persian pipe or Nargheelah, silver-mounted and elegantly adorned. Its owner had now recovered his good-humour, and his satellites with him. Not that they always took the cue from their master, for they were by their nature downright bears, and often sulky and ill-conditioned merely on their own score, yet more often boisterous and ribald. Hence fearful squabbles broke out at times between them and the Nā'ib himself, and scenes which afforded the lookers-on no slight diversion, and enlivened the monotony of the journey. But just now the prospect of a good breakfast had an admirable effect on their minds, and they were agreeable to the best of their abilities. Aboo-'Eysa was far too accustomed to such characters, and to the varying incidents of travelling, to be easily elated or depressed, and kept an even good-nature in his face and air, though he sometimes in private permitted himself very sarcastic remarks on the bad breeding of the Persians.

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But he had a side intrigue to carry on, which occasioned many and long conversations between him and the Nā'ib, and effectually obviated any serious chance of their falling out. We have already seen that Aboo-Boṭeyn, Feyṣul's ci-devant pilgrim-agent, had been on indifferent terms with Aboo-'Eysa, and had even done him positive injury. His elopement to 'Oneyzah now left his office vacant; it was a lucrative one, and exactly suited to our friend's ways, and to his long-standing familiarity with the Shiya'ees. They too had experienced his toleration and honest conduct, and held him in high esteem. The Nā'ib for his part hoped to obtain at Riaḍ full satisfaction for the past, and a guarantee of better things for the future. But he was an utter stranger at the Wahhabee court. A pact was therefore made between him and Aboo-'Eysa; the latter was to give him the entrées, to facilitate his access to Feyṣul (no easy matter), and to dispose the ministers and every one else in his favour; while the Nā'ib was to exact of the Wahhabee autocrat, as a *sine qua non* condition of good understanding hereafter, that Aboo-'Eysa should henceforth be sole conductor and plenipotentiary guide of the Persian pilgrims through Nejed. Such was the plan, long discussed, and at last fully agreed on, and all necessary steps in furtherance of its execution were accurately calculated and determined. We shall see the result before leaving Riaḍ.

The forenoon was far advanced before the sheep, the victim of our banquet, had been killed, skinned, boiled, and served up with rice, eggs, and other delicacies of the season. A hearty meal followed, and after a short interval of repose we got our baggage ready, thanked our host, and set out towards the north-east.

Our road yet lay in Ḳaseem, whose highlands we rejoined once more, and traversed till sunset. The view was very beautiful from its extent and variety of ups and downs, in broad grassy hills; little groups of trees stood in scattered detachments around; and had a river, that desideratum of Arabia, been in sight, one might almost have fancied oneself in the country bordering the Lower Rhine for some part of its course; readers may suppose, too, that there was less verdure here than in the European parallel; my comparison bears only on the

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general turn of the view. No river exists nearer Ḳaseem than Shaṭṭ, some hundred leagues off; and our eyes had been too long accustomed to the deceptive pools of the mirage, to associate with them even a passing idea of aught save drought and heat.

We journeyed on till dark, and then reached certain hillocks of a different character from the hard ground lately under our feet. Here began the Nefood, whose course from south-west to north-east, and then north, parts between Ḳaseem, Woshem, and Sedeyr. I have already said something of these sandy inlets when describing that which we crossed three months ago between Djowf and Shomer. The Nefood actually before us was fortunately narrower than our old acquaintance, but in other respects like it or worse. However, October is not July, even in Arabia, and we had this time a better guide in our company than the Bedouin Djedey'.

The first origin of this particular sand-stream is from the great westerly arm of the South Desert or Dahnā, which pushes up behind the Yemen and Wadi Nejrān, crosses the extremity of the long Wadi Dowāsir above Ḳela'at Bisha', and thence runs northward, having Djebel 'Aaseer, the Meccan territory, and the Ḥejāz on its left, and Nejed on its right. It gives off, almost at right angles, several lateral branches, of which the present is the longest, though not the widest. Passing alongside of the south-western chain of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ in its full length, and leaving the Nejdean pilgrim road between it and the mountain, it skirts the south of Ḳaseem, till reaching the extremity of that province, it enters Woshem, crosses a corner of it, and then turns northward, separating the rest of Woshem from Sedeyr; things more readily explained by a glance on the map. Its last undulations die away in the great stony plain that forms the north-eastern corner of the Peninsula, and connects it with the lands of Zobeyr, Baṣrah, and the Shaṭṭ.

On the verge of this desert strip we now halted a little, to eat a hasty supper, and to drink, the Arabs coffee and the Persians tea. But journeying in these sands, under the heat of the day, is alike killing to man and beast, and therefore Aboo-'Eysa had resolved that we should cross the greater portion under favour of the cooler hours of night. In pursuance of his

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idea, we were again mounted and on our way before the slanting pyramid of zodiacal light had faded in the west.

All night, a weary night, we waded up and down through waves of sand, in which the camels often sank up to their knees, and their riders were obliged to alight and help them on. There was no symptom of a track, no landmark to direct our way; the stars alone were now our compass and guide; but Aboo-'Eysa had passed this Nefood more than once, and knew the line of march by heart. When the first pale streak of dawn appeared on our right shoulder, we were near the summit of a sandy mountain, and the air blew keener than I had yet felt it in Arabia. We halted, and gathered together heaps of Ghaḍa and other desert shrubs to light blazing fires, by which some sat, some lay and slept, myself for one, till the rising sunbeams tipped the yellow crests around, and we resumed our way.

Now by full daylight appeared the true character of the region which we were traversing; its aspect resembled the Nefood north of Djebel Shomer, but the undulations were here higher and deeper, and the sand itself lighter and less stable. In most spots neither shrub nor blade of grass could fix its root, in others a scanty vegetation struggled through, but no trace of man anywhere. The camels ploughed slowly on; the Persians, unaccustomed to such scenes, were downcast and silent; all were tired, and no wonder. At last, a little before noon, and just as the sun's heat was becoming intolerable, we reached the verge of an immense crater-like hollow, certainly three or four miles in circumference, where the sand-billows receded on every side, and left in the midst a pit seven or eight hundred feet in depth, at whose base we could discern a white gleam of limestone rock, and a small group of houses, trees, and gardens, thus capriciously isolated in the very heart of the desert.

This was the little village and oasis of Wāsiṭ, or "the intermediary," so called because a central point between the three provinces of Ḳaseem, Sedeyr, and Woshem, yet belonging to none of them. Nor is it often visited by wayfarers, as we learnt from the inhabitants, men simple and half savage, from their little intercourse with the outer world, and unacquainted even with the common forms of Islamitic prayer, though

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dwelling in the midst of the Wahhabee dominions. They enquired from us about the current news of 'Oneyzah and other events of the day, much in the fashion that a Lincolnshire peasant might ask for the news of the Mexican war or the Cochin-China expedition—things far distant, and only known by indistinct report. Aboo'-Eysa said that in his wanderings he had met with other like islets of vegetation and human life, but even more cut off from social intercourse, world-forgetting, and world-forgotten. Lastly, there exist also oases totally untenanted save by birds and gazelles, especially in the southern waste.

A long winding descent brought us to the bottom of the valley, where on our arrival men and boys came out to stare at the Persians, and by exacting double prices for fruit and camel's milk, proved themselves not altogether such fools as they looked. For us, regarded as Arabs, we enjoyed their hospitality—it was necessarily a limited one—gratis; whereupon the Nā'ib grew jealous, and declaimed against the Arabs as "infidels," for not treating with suitable generosity pilgrims like themselves returning from the "house of God." Indeed this was a favourite theme with him all the way, and he seemed to think that his title of Ḥajj or "pilgrim" alone, setting other considerations aside, should have ensured him everywhere attentions "on the head and eye," in Eastern phrase; milk, eggs, and the rest for nothing, and honours withal. So, he assured us, pilgrims were treated in Persia; nor is this impossible, for the reverence paid to sacred localities and those who visit them, generally increases in direct proportion with the distance. Many in consequence were the remarks made by our Shirāz nobleman respecting the Indian and Persian Mahometans on the one hand, and the Arabs, above all the Nejdeans, on the other, equally advantageous to the former and soul-embittering to the latter, had they understood them; but they were in Hindoostanee.

After a while the head man of Wāsiṭ favoured us with an invitation into his garden, and there we reposed a couple of hours under the shade of dense fig-trees, till the noontide heat had somewhat abated. I should add that the fruits cultivated here—melons, dates, &c.—were, it will readily be supposed,

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much inferior both in size and quality to what we had been familiar with in Ḳaseem.

To get out of this pit was no easy matter; *facilis descensus*, &c., thought I; no ascending path showed itself in the required direction, and every one tried to push up his floundering beast where the sand appeared at a manageable slope, and firm to the footing. Camels and men fell and rolled back down the declivity, till some of the party shed tears of vexation, and others, more successful, laughed at the annoyance of their companions. Aboo-'Eysa ran about from one to the other, attempting to direct and keep them together, till finally, as Heaven willed, we reached the upper rim to the north.

Before us lay what seemed a storm-driven sea of fire in the red light of afternoon, and through it we wound our way, till about an hour before sunset we fell in with a sort of track or furrow. Next opened out on our road a long long descent, at whose extreme base we discerned the important and commercial town of Zulphah. Beyond it rose the wall-like steeps of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, so often heard of, and now seen close at hand. Needless to say how joyfully we welcomed the first view of that strange ridge, the heart and central knot of Arabia, beyond which whatever lay might almost be reckoned as a return journey.

We had now, in fact, crossed the Nefood, and had at our feet the great valley which constitutes the main line of communication between Nejed and the north, reaching even to the Tigris and Bagdad. The sun was setting when we reached the lowest ebb of the sand ocean, and left its enormous waves piled up ridge above ridge behind us; Barakāt and myself, thanks to the excellent fibre of our dromedaries, were far in front of our associates, and we willingly allowed the beasts to turn aside from the track and feed on the copious pasturage of Ṭhemām, a ragged sweet-smelling grass common throughout Nejed, and often mentioned by its poets, while we gazed now on the red range in our rear, now on the long valley stretching upon our right and left, to north and south, with the broken outlines of the walls of Zulphah a mile or more in front, and now on the precipitous though low fortress-ledge of Ṭoweyḳ which bordered the horizon.

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Night was fast coming on when we entered the scattered plantations of Zulphah. We traversed them awhile, amid enquiries from peasants returning home after their day's labour, and barking dogs who objected to our intrusion on their precincts at so late an hour. In the town itself we were at once surprised by meeting a much larger proportion of women than of men. This was occasioned by the absence of a great part of the male population in the war of 'Oneyzah. Zulphah indeed does not strictly belong to any of the three adjoining provinces: it stands alone on the government register, and furnishes about six hundred fighting men to the state wars or "Ghazowāt." But its sympathies are Wahhabee, and its indwellers much nearer allied by blood no less than by feeling to the Nejdean mountaineers of Sedeyr than to the plainsmen of Ḳaseem or the corn-merchants of Woshem. It had sent its contingent to the campaign only two days before; but the Zulphah warriors had taken a circuitous road down the valley, to spare themselves and their horses the shorter but laborious cut across the Nefood by which we had come; hence we had not met them on their march—perhaps all the better for ourselves.

We picked out our way to the palace of the governor, a Nejdean by birth, and said to have collected large riches while here in office. For the town is not only warlike but wealthy; it is the meeting-point and depôt of the north-bound commerce from Sedeyr, 'Aared, Woshem, and whatever adjoins them; and its inhabitants are themselves no inconsiderable merchants and very bold travellers, often to be seen at Zobeyr, Koweyt, and Baṣrah. Their town is moreover the key of Nejed on this side, and an important military position, barring the entrance of the valley where it stands, and which communicates directly with Wadi Ḥaneefah, by which it leads to the capital itself. On this very road 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Sa'ood, the fiercest and best known to history among the Wahhabee monarchs, led his troops sixty years ago to the siege of Meshid 'Alee, and the plunder of Kerbela.

Arrived at the palace gate we were duly announced to the governor, but his highness was not in the hospitable vein that evening, and would not even allow us the shelter of the court-

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yard, so we encamped in the open air at the foot of his outer wall near the gateway. A band of Ṣolibahs had pitched their tents a little lower down; they had just come from a hunting expedition somewhere to the north to sell their game in Zulphah.

Meanwhile the town governor half repented him of his discourtesy, and generously resolved to give us board, though not lodging. In pursuance of this better thought he sent some of his attendants to the Ṣolibahs, and purchased from them a fine deer; this was handed over to the Nā'ib's servants, who set about dressing it for supper. The Ṣolibahs affirmed that it belonged to a peculiar species that never drinks water, and whose flesh is supposed to have a super-excellent flavour. Certainly the specimen before us was excellent eating, besides being served up with an extraordinary allowance of that best of sauces, hunger; but whether it had really in its lifetime belonged to the "Total Abstinence from all Kinds of Drink Society," I do not know; though the Arabs declare such to be the case with whole herds of the gazelle tribe hereabouts. Yet the desert-herbs seem hardly juicy enough to supply the want of the pure liquid, nor could cutaneous absorption extract much humidity from the torrid air; in short, I rather question the correctness of the statement. Ostriches too are reported to be equally abstemious; and thus far is certain, that they are rarely met with except in such utterly arid spots as seem to preclude all possibility of water.

Next morning the Nā'ib was too tired to set out early, and we all waited where we were for an hour or more after sunrise. Barakāt and myself strolled about among the Ṣolibah tents, where the full forms and comparatively fair complexions of their tenants, their large eyes very unlike the narrow peepers of most Bedouins, and a peculiar cast of features, helped to confirm me in the belief of what report asserts touching the northerly origin of these wanderers, probably Syrian. They bantered and laughed readily enough, both with us and at us, but we could get no available information from them, so habitual is their reserve on all serious topics, nor is it wholly out of place among Mahometans and Wahhabees. The women were unveiled, and quite as forward as the men, or forwarder.

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A very pretty girl of the tribe played off this morning a trick too characteristic for omission. Its victim was the old Nā'ib, who was now up and taking his draught of early tea. The young lady, accompanied by two of her relatives, contrived to come and go backwards and forwards before the Persian group, till her glances had fairly wounded Moḥammed-'Alee's heart. He engaged her in a long and endearing conversation, and ended by a proposal of marriage. The family with well-affected joy gave a seeming assent, and accordingly when at last we climbed our dromedaries to pursue our journey, behold the dark-eyed gipsy-featured nymph with an elderly Ṣolibah relation, perhaps her father, both mounted on scraggy camels, alongside of the Nā'ib, who with looks of unutterable tenderness was making the handsomest offers to his future bride. These she received with becoming bashfulness, and for half an hour of the way bantered her enamoured Strephon to her heart's content; till on our making a brief halt for breakfast at the verge of the town-gardens, she pretended to recollect I know not what valuable left behind at the Ṣolibah camp, and went back with her kinsman to fetch it, after giving a woman's promise of a speedy return. The deluded swain tarried in hope, and made us all tarry in impatience for nearly two hours; but neither bride nor bridesman reappeared, and the Nā'ib had to console himself with the thought of the half-dozen spouses (I had it from himself) who awaited him on his return home to Meshid 'Alee, as he slowly and sadly remounted his dromedary, and added another chapter to the long collection of anecdotes which, like most bad men, he loved to recount about the deceitfulness of the fair sex.

We had now passed the whole length of the town, several streets of which had been lately swept away by the winter torrents that pour at times their short-lived fury down this valley. Before us to the south-east stretched the long hollow; on our right was the Nefood, on our left Djebel Ṭoweyḳ and the province of Sedeyr. The mountain air blew cool, and this day's journey was a far pleasanter one than its predecessor. We continued our march down the valley till the afternoon, when we saw in front a remarkable promontory or "Khosheym," literally, "a little nose," the generic name here

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for all jutting crags, starting out abruptly from the mountain level into the gully beneath, which here divides and goes part south-east-by-east to Shaḳra the capital of Woshem, and part south-west into the Nefood, and so on to Ḳaseem. By this latter path the Zulphah detachment had travelled three days before. For us, we followed neither branch, but turned aside into a narrow gorge running up at a sharp angle to the north-east, and thus entered between the heights of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ itself.

This mountain essentially constitutes Nejed. It is a wide and flat chain, or rather plateau, whose general form is that of a huge crescent; its central and broadest segment belongs to the province of 'Aaredj; its north-eastern horn to that of Sedeyr; and in the first part of its southerly limb lies Woshem, after which the mountain runs on between the south and west behind the pilgrim road of Nejed, and thus severs it from Wadi Dowāsir. Ḳaseem with its lowlands is in front of, and in a manner embraced by, this part of the crescent; while Ḥaṣa to the east, Yemāmah and Aflāj to the south, and the interminable valley of Dowāsir to the south-west, form its background and appendages. If I may be permitted here to give my rough guess regarding the elevation of the main plateau, a guess grounded partly on the vegetation, climate, and similar local features, partly on an approximative estimate of the ascent itself, and of the subsequent descent on the other or sea side, I should say that it varies from a height of one to two thousand feet above the surrounding level of the Peninsula, and may thus be about three thousand feet at most above the sea. Its loftiest ledges occur in the Sedeyr district, where we shall pass them before long; the centre and the south-westerly arm is certainly lower. Djebel Ṭoweyḳ is the middle knot of Arabia, its Caucasus, so to say; and is still, as it has often been in former times, the turning point of the whole, or almost the whole, Peninsula in a political and national bearing. To it alone is the term "Nejed," strictly and topographically applied; although the same denomination is sometimes, nay, often, given by the Arabs themselves to all the inland provinces now under Wahhabee rule; and hence Yemāmah, Ḥareeḳ, Aflāj, Dowāsir, and Ḳaseem have acquired the name of "Nejed," but

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more in a governmental than in a geographical sense. Foreigners, not Europeans, but the natives of Syria, Bagdad, and Egypt, often extend the aforesaid title in a general way to whatever lies within or even on the desert girdle that intervenes between the main lands of Arabia Proper and its frontiers; and in this way Djebel Shomer, and even Djowf, Koweyt, and Ḥaṣa, are by them classed among the "Nejed" or "up-country," an error which is entirely disavowed within the limits of the Peninsula, and should as such be effaced from our maps.

Let me remark here, that Europeans who visit or describe the East should be on their guard against taking in a strict and literal sense the vague phrases employed by most Arabs, but above all by Egyptians and Syrians, when speaking of stranger countries and people; the frequent use of synonyms and homonyms is also a common source of mistake to foreign investigators. It is only by questioning many individuals, and that at separate times and places, and then leisurely comparing one's notes of the information thus obtained, that anything like accuracy can be reached even on the most leading topics, and then too it is best to bring one's own eyes and ears to bear on the spot or object in question, if possible. Arab vagueness of ideas is often, as I have just hinted, merely the result or expression of a corresponding vagueness in the language, not of any set desire to deceive; but sometimes the latter motive finds place also. No Nejdean, great or small, would be over anxious to give a European too exact a notion of his native country, any more than he would let him enter it, if he could help it, and the same may be said of Arabs at large.

The name "Ṭoweyḳ" is a diminutive form of the word "Ṭowḳ," or "garland," "twist," and thus signifies "the little garland," or "little twist." My philological readers cannot have failed to remark ere this the frequent occurrence of the well-known diminutive of Arab nouns, represented in English equivalents by an "o" in the place of the first vowel, and the diphthong "ey" for the second. Thus "Kelb," "a dog," becomes "Koleyb," "a little dog;" "Rajel," "a man," "Rojeyl," "a little man;" "Ḍow'," "light" or "fire," "Ḍo'wey'," "a little light" or "little fire," and so forth. Nejdeans employ this form of speech on all occasions, reasonable or unreasonable; and few

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substantives with them escape the process. Familiarity, affection, contempt, esteem, smallness, nay, greatness itself, are all reasons with them for transforming their nouns, and they often do it "only for wantonness," without any reason soever. Ṭoweyḳ in particular owes its diminutive misnomen (for it is a huge mountain) to national endearment, so said my friends. The radical idea of a "twist" is more happily adapted to it, since a stranger and more complicated labyrinth of valleys, bends, ins and outs, gullies, torrent-courses, and perpendicular precipices, cannot be imagined, besides the notable inflection of the entire chain, and its half-moon form, already described.

The great mass of upland, thus named "Ṭoweyḳ," or "Nejed," is for the most of calcareous formation, though toward east and south peaks of granite are sometimes intermixed with the limestone rock, or clustered apart. Basalt, to the best of my knowledge, appears nowhere, and in this respect Ṭoweyḳ offers a remarkable contrast to the Shomer range. There the prevailing formation is reddish granite and basalt, rising in fantastic peaks and sierras; here a white table-land, and long parallel lines like stairs. The extreme verge is almost always abrupt, and takes a bold rise of about five or six hundred feet sheer in chalky cliffs from the adjoining plain. Then succeeds a table-land, various in extent, and nearly level throughout; then another step of three or four hundred feet, followed by a second and higher table-land; and occasionally a third and yet loftier plateau crowns the second; but the summit is invariably flat, excepting the few granite crests on the further side of Sedeyr and towards Yemamah. These high grounds are for the most clothed on their upper surface with fine and sufficient pasture, which lasts throughout the year; but the greater the elevation the less is the fertility and the drier the soil. Trees, solitary or in little groups, are here common; not indeed the well-known Ithel of the plain, but the Sidr (or, according to the Nejdean dialect, Sedeyr, whence the name of one great province), or the Markh, with its wide-spreading oak-like branches, and the tangled thorny Ṭalḥ. Little water is to be found, at any rate in autumn, though I saw some spots that appeared to have pools in spring; we met with one, and one only, perennial source, which I will describe when we reach it.

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The entire plateau is intersected by a maze of valleys, some broad, some narrow, some long and winding, some of little length, but almost all bordered with steep and at times precipitous banks, and looking as though they had been artificially cut out in the limestone mountain. In these countless hollows is concentrated the fertility and the population of Nejed; gardens and houses, cultivation and villages, hidden from view among the depths while one journeys over the dry flats (I had well-nigh called them "denes," for they often reminded me of those near Yarmouth) above, till one comes suddenly on the mass of emerald green beneath. One would think that two different lands and climates had been somehow interwoven into one, yet remained unblended. The soil of these valleys is light, and mixed with marl, sand, and little pebbles washed down from the heights, for everywhere their abrupt edges are furrowed by torrent tracks, that collecting above rush over in winter, and often turn the greater part of the gully below into a violent watercourse for two or three days, till the momentary supply is spent, and then pools and plashes remain through the months of spring, while the most of the water sinks underground, where it forms an unfailing supply for the wells in summer, or breaks out once more in living springs amid the low lands of Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef, towards the sea-coast, and beyond the outskirts of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ itself. However, none of these winter torrents finds its way unbroken to the sea; some are at once reabsorbed, while yet within the limits of the mountain labyrinth, whose watershed, I should add, lies on the eastern, not on the western side; while a few, so the natives of the country told me, make their way right through Ṭoweyḳ to the Nefood on the west, or to the Dahnā on the east and south, and are there speedily lost in the deep sands, where a Rhine or a Euphrates could hardly avoid a similar fate. Hence, I say it in parenthesis, the geographers who kindly supply Arabia, especially on its eastern side, with rivers going from Ḍerey'eeyah or elsewhere to the sea, have been more liberal to the land than Nature herself, without even one exception. For Wadi Aftan, often marked out in maps for a stream, we shall have the pleasure of tracking it in its whole length before long, and shall then better see what it really is.

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However, though above-ground waters are rare and temporary, the underground provision is constant and copious, and hence the great fertility of these valleys. Nor is the water hard to get at, for the depth of the wells throughout Nejed seldom exceeds twelve or fifteen feet from the upper rim to the water, and often less, especially towards the southern half of 'Aaredh and Yemāmah. I had forgotten to say, in my topographical description of Ḳaseem, that the water of that province has very generally a saltish taste, just enough to be perceptible, but not disagreeable, at least to those accustomed to drink from our own Norfolk "swipes." But here in Nejed water is hardly ever brackish, but presents instead sensible traces of iron. These phenomena find a ready explanation in the conditions of the respective soils themselves. Rocksalt of the purest quality is common in Ḳaseem, we have seen it a cheap and abundant article of sale at Bereydah, and throughout the province the earth has a saline flavour when placed on the tongue. On the other hand, in Nejed, and particularly towards the eastern shelves of the plateau, iron ore occurs in quantities sufficient to attract even Arab notice, and near Soley' I saw a whole range of decidedly ferrugineous hills, and was told of more. Hence, the chalybeate acquirements of the water when it filters through its underground passages. This is the case with most wells about Ḥoreymelah, Riadh, and down Wadi Ḥaneefah and Soley' up to the wells of Oweysiṭ.

The climate of the northern part of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, whether plateau or valley, coincident with the province of Sedeyr, is perhaps one of the healthiest in the world; an exception might be made in favour of Djebel Shomer alone. The above-named districts resemble each other closely in dryness of atmosphere, and the inhabitants of Sedeyr, like those of Shomer, are remarkable for their ruddy complexion and well developed stature. But when we approach the centre of the mountain crescent, where its whole level lowers, while the more southerly latitude brings it nearer to the prevailing influences of the tropical zone, the air becomes damper and more relaxing, and a less salubrious climate pictures itself in the sallower faces and slenderer make of its denizens. Of Yemāmah and the other meridional regions, between Ṭoweyḳ itself and the great Dahnā,

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I shall speak when we come to visit them. Nor are further generalities on this subject now necessary, since we are on the point of traversing the chain from side to side, and seeing it in detail.

I had said that just before the bifurcation of the valley, part to Shaḳra and Wadi Ḥaneefah, and part to the westerly Woshem, our conductor led us aside by a sharp turn to the north-east, where we entered a gorge of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, and found ourselves thus within the limits of the province of Sedeyr. We had not long followed the narrow pass, when trees and verdure clustering up against its left side indicated our approach to human habitation. Here nestled the village of Ghāṭ, a name common to many localities in Central Arabia, and sometimes varied into Ghoweyṭ, Ghouṭah, Ghoweyṭah, and so forth; all words implying "a hollow," with an idea of fertility annexed; just the same topographical peculiarity which obtains sometimes in our own midland counties the familiar denomination of "punch-bowl." I should, however, warn all familiar with the Sanscrit and Indian tongues, that the Arab etymology of this word has nothing in common with the Indian "Ghat" or "Ghawt," for so Englishmen love to mispronounce it, though the syllables may bear a casual assonance. Such coincidences of vocal combination may occur, the mere result of chance or of phonic imitation, between the Indian and the Arabic languages; and I am well aware of the stress, undue I must think, laid on them by some highly learned and respectable authorities; but the approximations alluded to are seemingly too loose, and in this case also too narrow a base for the wide and weighty superstructure of theory built upon them. Real and tangible community of origin and root between the Semitic and the Aryan dialects is, so it appears to me at least, beyond practical identification; the streams are not more distinct than the fountains, and the tongues than the parentage, at all events from Babel downwards.

The proofs of a negative, to be sufficient, must needs be bulky, and above all of a negative like this; a brace of volumes might hardly contain all to be said on the subject; and my present task is geographical rather than linguistic. Accordingly, I leave to my learned readers the accurate investi-

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gation of a matter on which, time and leisure permitting, I would gladly bestow my own efforts in a separate work; only adding here, in order to anticipate possible controversy, that by "Indian" languages I mean only Sanscrit and its modernizations or corruptions, namely, Bengalee, Mahrattee, Guzerattee, Concanee, and the like. But I do not strictly and absolutely include Tamool, and the other dialects of the southern Hindoo peninsula and Ceylon; for a certain community of "radicals" is occasionally, though rarely, observable between these last and the so-called Semitic tongues. I remember once, when it was my sad lot to be unavoidably present at a dull public discourse, staving off sleep by making a list in my memory of radicals or primary words shared alike by Hebrew and Tamool; and in about half an hour reminiscence had supplied me with nearly thirty. But to return to Sedeyr and the Arab Ghāṭ.

It was now that latter part of the afternoon which Arabs call 'Aṣr, when we entered the welcome shade, and made straight for the chief's house. Like the rest of the village it was situated on the margin of the valley, close under the white cliff, and so placed the better to escape the injuries of torrents pouring down the mid hollow in the rainy season. The traces of water were indeed too evident throughout the valley, and some houses built too low down had been already ruined. The wells were so copiously supplied, even at this the very driest season of the year, that their overflow sufficed to fill a large reservoir from which ran on all sides rivulets which might almost have been taken for natural, overshadowed by fig-trees and pomegranates, while the palm-trees rivalled in height those of Ḳaseem. The houses, like the gardens, were prettily placed in shelving rows one above the other against the mountain rise. Before the chief's own residence was an open space, and close by a true Wahhabee mosque, large and unadorned, a mere meeting-house, unprofaned by the post-Mahomet inventions of minarets and carpets. Here we were in Nejed; and if I did not exactly sympathise with the feelings of Touchstone on his arrival in Arden, I could not but feel that his remarks then and there had a certain truth; but travellers must be content.

However, the inhabitants of Nejed at large, and especially

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those of Sedeyr, have one good quality, very consolatory for those who leave home to visit their land—I mean hospitality to their guests. For this they are famed in Arabia and out of Arabia, in prose and verse, and they really deserve their reputation. The chief of Ghāṭ was a native of the province, young, cheerful, and exquisitely polite. We were all invited in, our camels were looked after, and we ourselves soon seated in the large and lofty Ḳ'hāwah, where chequered sunbeams aslant through the trellised windows illuminated the handsome group seated in the upper and more honourable part of the hall. There, by the host and his family, all in clean shirts and black cloaks, with new coloured head-dresses and silver-hilted swords, sat the Nā'ib making a very good figure in his Persian dress and large turban, while Aboo-'Eysa, who, to keep him company, had exchanged the soiled garments of the road for better apparel, took his place close to the ambassador; the attendants of the Nā'ib ranged themselves on one side, and Barakāt and I on the other. Many were the "Y'ahla" and "Marḥaba's" ("welcome, honoured guests," &c.) and many too the Allah-seasoned phrases indispensable in Wahhabee conversation. Of course no smoking was allowed; even the Nā'ib could not venture on his Nargheelah. Aboo-'Eysa had taken a farewell whiff at his "cutty-pipe," before entering the village, and had advised me to do the same, remarking that "these dogs will hold us for infidels if we do it in their presence," and now looked as innocent of tobacco as the babe unborn. Coffee was however plentiful, and very good. The conversation here and henceforth up to Riaḍ, whether in towns or villages, among high or low, ran mainly on two inexhaustible topics: the one, the excellencies and virtues of Feyṣul, with his certain triumph over the infidels of 'Oneyzah; the other the wickedness and depravity of Zāmil and his party, and their certain defeat and ruin. Then came "Allāhŭ yensor el-Muslimeen," "may God give the victory to the Muslims;" "Allāhŭ yensor Feyṣul," "may God give the victory to Feyṣul;" "W'elladee yusellimŭ Feyṣul," "by Him who protects Feyṣul;" "Allāhŭ yesalliṭ el-Muslimeen 'alā'l 'keffār," "may God give over the infidels to the power of the Muslims;" and so on, till we began to say with Aboo-'Eysa, "Kuffaroona b'il-Muslimeen," "they put us to our

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wits' end with their Muslims," and wished as heartily for their defeat as they did for that of their opponents. Of Feyṣul no one dared speak except in a subdued tone of reverence applicable to a demigod at the very moment of apotheosis; of one whom to obey was the sure countersign of predestination, and to oppose, the most unpardonable impiety. All along the devout interjections "Astaghfir Allāh," "La Ilāh illa Allāh," "Towwakil 'ala' Allāh," and the rest of that catalogue, filled up every chink of talk and dotted the whole conversation, till there was no getting on consecutively with any ordinary topic, so thickly did supernatural agency meet one at every turning.

Of the peculiar doctrines and state of mind that give rise to so marked a phraseology, and to the usages here prevailing, I shall not at present speak, for fear of rendering our journey through Sedeyr interminable from the outset. I will only remark that Aboo-'Eysa and ourselves observed the conformity of manner which courtesy required, and either said nothing, or assented when assent was possible. The Meccans were often in fault, and the Persians proved even less polite and less prudent; and had it not been that partly consideration for the rank of the Nā'ib and the business on which he was bound, and partly the natural desire of earning a good report among strangers, restrained their hosts from frequent repartee or comment, serious and even dangerous disputes might have occurred; indeed Aboo-'Eysa had more than once need of all his conciliatory skill to avert the ill consequences of Iranian bad humour and incivility. Oftener the silent hearers "thought the more," perhaps, but said nothing; for a Nejdean makes it his boast to put up with rudeness and passion, and considers the bearing such with equability and composure to be the test-proof of superiority in character and good-breeding. Never did I see Chesterfield's master maxim of acknowledging no insult save such as gives one a right to run the insulter through the body, better exemplified than by the inhabitants of Nejed, who fully understand the important truth that self-restraint is the first condition of being a gentleman. Like every other rule, this admits of exceptions, personal or local; but the dominant tone of society, especially in Sedeyr, is one of dignified and even refined politeness.

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These men in their hearts hold Egypt, Persia, Bagdad, Damascus, and, to sum up, all the world withoutside of Nejed, to be little better than dens of thieves and lairs of heresy and infidelity. Yet scarcely will they have heard, in answer to the first customary demands of introduction, that their guest is from any one of the above-named places, than they will begin a eulogy of town, country, and people, as though they had been the objects of their lifelong admiration, and extol the learning, piety, and good fame of those whom they most disagree with, and against whom they are ready to draw the sword of Islam at a moment's notice; and this they will do in so perfectly quiet, easy, and natural a way, that it is difficult not to believe their words the faithful echo of their innermost thoughts; nor need their guest, if gifted with ordinary prudence, fear any hint of disapproval touching his own personal ways and deeds. "Eḍ-ḍeyf ma 'ăḳām melik," "the guest while in the house is its lord," is a trite saying with Nejdeans, and expresses to the life the deference with which they treat whoever has once been received under their roof. Nor when the stranger walks the streets will anyone stare at him, much less stop to gaze; nor will even the boys gather and laugh at him, nor will any whisper or aside remark be heard as he passes by. Perhaps foreigners do not come off so smoothly everywhere else. I ought to add that our own half-Syrian dress was hardly less outlandish and "furrener-looking" in Nejed than the long robe of a Lithuanian Jew or the furs of a Cossack in the streets of Norwich or Derby. The Persians appeared even more exotic. But Nejdean civility was above all such considerations. My readers must however recall to mind that Sedeyr surpasses in this respect the other provinces of Ṭoweyḳ, and in consequence some modification and deduction must be made before the portrait thus drawn can be suitably applied to 'Aareḍ, Aflāj, and Yemāmah. Besides, I speak only of what passes between hosts and guests reciprocally received and acknowledged for such; with casual strangers and unauthenticated foreigners much less courtesy is used, occasionally none.

The hospitality of Sedeyr is elegant and copious. After coffee and small talk in the Ḳ'hāwah, we mounted to the upper storey, where we found a large room with an open verandah

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prepared for our more express reception, and fruits, melons and peaches to wit, piled up in large dishes, to employ our leisure moments till supper should be ready. Here we were supposed to make ourselves perfectly at home, and might even light the "pipe of peace," the scandal of publicity not being considered to affect these apartments thus set apart exclusively for our use. Our host and his kinsmen came in and out, always ready for talk or service, and we began from their conversation to collect much valuable information about the actual state and government of Nejed proper.

Here Mohanna's men left us and returned home. No personal danger was to be apprehended on the road by travellers like ourselves "fi wejh Feyṣul," "in the countenance of Feyṣul," or "under" it, to make the Arab phrase English; and besides, we were sure of being henceforth accompanied from village to village, and from town to town, by the inhabitants of the country itself; not indeed for security, but for honour. I need hardly say that the honour was mainly intended for the Nā'ib and Aboo-'Eysa; for us, throughout this stage of our itinerary, we attracted comparatively little attention, and this was indeed to be desired, though we had no lack of courteous and friendly treatment everywhere.

Next morning early, when we mounted each his camel or dromedary, we found the chief, with some youths of his kin, already on horseback to escort us on our way. We followed for about half an hour the ascending course of the gorge, under the shade of forest trees—the plane was one, somewhat to my surprise—intermingled with palms, between whose foliage white glimpses of the overhanging cliff glittered to the morning light, till we arrived at the "'Aḳabah," or ascent. It may be worth noticing that all steep ascents in these countries bear the name of "'Aḳabah" or "Thenee'yah," which latter may be translated "winding," a suitable term, since the rapidity of the hill-rise renders a corkscrew arrangement of the path often necessary to make it practicable for four-footed climbers, goats excepted. Hence such or such a pass is distinguished by the addition of the name belonging to the nearest locality; v.g. here it is "'Aḳabat-el-Ghāṭ," "the ascent of Ghāṭ," and so on, to avoid, and not unfrequently to produce, confusion.

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We were now at the *cul-de-sac*, or abrupt termination of the mountain cleft, and in front a narrow twisting path, like an uncoiled ribbon of white satin, reaching up several hundred feet to the table-land above, amid rocks and masses of lime and marl mingled with sandstone. A little water just oozing out at the base, like "Sibyl's well," showed the line taken by the stream after rain. Here ensued a contest of politeness, the chief insisting on accompanying us farther, and Aboo-'Eysa (for the Persians remained like mutes) on his returning home. After many pretty speeches on either side, our quondam host wished us all in general, and then every one in particular, good speed, and went back, while a few of his relatives continued for our escort.

Soon we attained the great plateau, of which I have a few pages since given an anticipated description. And here for the first time since our passage of the Ghour between Gaza and Ma'ān—a region already sufficiently delineated—we met with a clouded sky and a disturbed atmosphere. But my readers will recall to mind that it was now the 7th of October, and not be surprised at an autumn storm. The sky, hitherto perfectly clear, was suddenly, indeed almost instantaneously, overcast, and a furious gust of wind rushed down, while clouds of dust darkened the air, till we could hardly see our way. This came in time to interrupt a most "tedious brief" story about the miraculous disappearance of a Persian princess (I forget her name), the imaginary wife of Ḥoseyn, son of 'Alee, and mother of the famous Zeyn-el-'Abideen, all on an Oriental Pegasus, a silly Shiya'ee tale with which the Nā'ib was entertaining me in atrociously bad Arabic, till the violent gale cut short all conversation. Next followed a few drops of rain, but the wind was too high to allow of a good shower, and in about half an hour the whole had blown over; however, the breeze which succeeded was delightfully cool, and worthy of the Apennines.

About noon we halted in a brushwood covered plain, to light fire and prepare coffee. After which we pursued our easterly way, still a little to the north, now and then meeting with travellers or peasants; but a European would find these roads very lonely in comparison with those of his own native country.

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All the more did I admire the perfect submission and strict police enforced by the central government, so that even a casual robbery is very rare in the provinces, and highwaymen are totally out of the question. At last, near the same hour of afternoon that had brought us the day before to Ghāṭ, we came in sight of Mejmaa', formerly capital of the province, and still a place of considerable importance. The population may be, to judge by appearances and hearsay, between ten and twelve thousand souls, and the town is advantageously situated on a little eminence amid a broad shallow valley, and surrounded by a luxuriance of gardens and trees, surpassing whatever I have seen elsewhere in Sedeyr, even at Djelājil, though this latter is famed in Arab verse. The city walls were high, that is, of about thirty feet, and a large square fortress in the heart of the town commands it and all the country round. The outer bulwarks are girdled by a very deep trench partly full of water; the plantations are, Nejdean fashion, all without the walls.

Here the family of Es-Sedeyree, to give them their ordinary and territorial name, ruled the entire province till within a quite recent date. The Wahhabee monarchs, whose staunch adherents they had always been, had confirmed them in their hereditary authority, and the loss of nominal independence was compensated by an accession of real power. In the present generation the head of the family was Aḥmed, left by his father's death, while yet young, chief at Mejmaa', along with his junior brothers Moḥammed and 'Abd-el-Maḥṣin. Sedeyr had been for centuries past closely allied with 'Aareḍ, and no party grudge or rivalry of old standing existed between these two main sections of Nejed; and hence the Wahhabite autocrat tolerated here a deviation from his ordinary line of policy, and allowed the local family to remain for a while in possession of their ancestral rights, without attempting to dislodge them in favour of his creatures or slaves. But when in process of time Sedeyr had become thoroughly incorporated with 'Aareḍ, and the pervading infiltration of Wahhabee doctrines rendered resistance improbable, Feyṣul ventured to draw, so to speak, on his stock-in-hand of Sedeyr popularity, and resolved to apply his general rule to this long exceptional case by the deposition of the indigenous chiefs of Mejmaa'. This he accomplished

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no less warily than effectually. First he named the eldest, Aḥmed, leader in an expedition, which I will afterwards describe, against 'Omān, and, having got him once there, fixed him permanently in that remote region as governor of the Wahhabee outpost at Bereymah, but really in a sort of honourable banishment. The second Sedeyree, Moḥammed, was next removed to another and a distant station by being appointed vice-governor of the town of Hofhoof in Ḥaṣa, where, however, further changes awaited him. The youngest of the three, 'Abd-el-Maḥṣin, was for a space left in the post that his elder brothers had successively occupied, as chief over his native province. But not long before the epoch of our visit, Feyṣul ultimately deprived him too of his authority and title, and reduced him to what might be called the position of a private nobleman at Mejmaa', which now by the same act ceased to be capital of Sedeyr. This precedence was henceforth conferred by the Riaḍ government on the town of Toweym, a day's journey to the south-east, and hither a new administrator of the province and a native of 'Aareḍ was sent, in the name of the Wahhabee sovereign. 'Abd-el-Maḥṣin was deeply wounded, he could not be otherwise, by these measures, with all the members of his family; but they did not feel themselves strong enough, especially in Aḥmed's absence, to try the doubtful chance of resistance and a war like that of 'Oneyzah, so they put the best face possible on the matter, and stayed at home, quietly occupied with their property and commerce, and waiting till "the whirligig of time should bring in his revenges."

'Abd-el-Maḥṣin gave us a splendid reception. His palace, once centre of Sedeyr, is large and lofty, and he had prepared our lodgings in an upper storey, the balconies of which commanded a noble view of the mountain steppes north and east, with the gardens and groves below in green masses at our feet. Here we rested that evening, not unlike yesterday's, except in the superior quality of the entertainment, and that somewhat fewer eulogies of Feyṣul were interchanged; this was natural, the past considered. Aboo-'Eysa was an old friend of our host's, and gathered from him the latest news of Riaḍ and the interior of the empire, details which he subsequently discussed with us in private. Moḥammed 'Alee wrote his journal

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by the gleam of a Persian lamp; he was in the habit of noting down minutely all incidents day by day, and had compiled a very amusing work for light reading, and enough, were it translated and published, to throw mine, I fear, into the shade. It was composed in Persian, but the Nā'ib sometimes favoured me with a recital, while he rendered it, for my ignorance, into bad Arabic or good Hindoostanee. I did not deem it necessary to let him know in return that I also kept a journal, for fear of awakening his suspicions; indeed they were already too much on the alert by reminiscences of Englishmen at Hyderabad or Bombay, and then lulled again to repose by Arab semblances, or by the skilful anodynes of Aboo-'Eysa, who everywhere extolled the medical skill and upheld the authentic Syrian character of his destined partner in the therapeutic firm of Hofhoof.

Here the Nā'ib's stock of tobacco began to run short, and he knew not whence to get a fresh supply, in a land where that plant is only known by the name of "el Mukzhee," or "the shameful," or by a still worse and wholly untranslatable denomination, which would imply it to be the immediate production of the Evil One, but after a fashion that the fiery dryness of his Satanic complexion might seem to render hardly credible. Nevertheless, such is the belief of the Wahhabees, who steadily assert that the first tobacco-sprouts arose from this very singular and diabolical irrigation, whence a name not to be mentioned to ears polite. Who then could dream, I do not say of employing, but of trafficking in, or even of possessing, so infamous an article? However, throughout the world, and by consequence in Nejed too, no law but is violated, and no customs regulation but suffers from contraband. In this hope, founded on the weakness of human nature, Ḥoseyn, the servant of the Nā'ib, went a hunting, money in hand, amid the warehouses of Mejmaa', and excited immense disgust by his public enquiries after the "shameful;" but his first efforts met with no success. At last he applied to Aboo-'Eysa, whose experience of the land had taught him facts and manœuvres beyond the attainment of a raw thick-witted Bagdadee. Our friend had often been in precisely the same predicament wherein the Nā'ib now lay, but knew much better where and how to distinguish between

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the real and the apparent, and under what veils private practice might contravene public observance. In fact, the number of smokers in Nejed is nowise small, and includes many a name of high birth and strict outside profession. Furnished with the requisite sum, Aboo-'Eysa set out on a quieter but a more effectual search, and soon reappeared with a bag containing two good pounds avoirdupois of the Satanic leaf, which he handed over to the Nā'ib, after deducting a well-earned perquisite in kind, shared between him and ourselves.

We were up early next morning, for the night air was brisk, and a few hours of sleep had sufficed us. The whole level of the depression where Mejmaa' stands almost equals that of the surface of the first plateau, and to this now succeeded a second of yet greater height, forming part of the midrib of Ṭoweyḳ. We took the high ground as the shorter route, instead of keeping to the lower steppe, and went on with a wide landscape on either side, but not in front, where at some distance to the east a third and loftier ledge arose to shut out the distant view.

After sunrise we came on a phenomenon of a nature, I believe, without a second or a parallel in Central Arabia, yet withal most welcome, namely, a tolerably large source of running water, forming a wide and deepish stream, with grassy banks, and frogs croaking in the herbage. We opened our eyes in amazement; it was the first of the kind that we had beheld since leaving the valley of Djowf. But though a living, it is a short-lived rivulet, reaching only four or five hours' distance to Djelājil, where it is lost amid the plantations of the suburbs. I have already stated that the mountain eastward rose higher than the level on which we were now travelling, and consequently neither this stream, nor any other hereabouts, if such exist, could reach even the Dahnā, much less the sea.

Djelājil was indeed close at hand; we passed it about midday, but without halting. It is a place remarkable for its remote antiquity, being mentioned by 'Amroo'l' Ḳēys and 'Antarah before the Mahometan era; at the present time it is still a considerable town, with an unusual extent of palm-groves and irrigation around, furnished by the stream just spoken of. But its buildings and castle offer nothing worthy

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of notice, unless that they look very pretty peeping out amid the trees. An hour later we had on the opposite, that is, the left hand, the town of Rowḍah or "garden," an almost generic name; it seemed the counterpart of Djelājil in size and adjacent fertility. I should not omit to say that Djelājil means on translation "bells," especially those attached to the necks of mules or sheep, sometimes of camels.

At last we entered in between the heights of the uppermost plateau; they rose here and there like huge flat-topped towers or wide platforms on either side, leaving, however, large openings betwixt, and pasture plains of great extent. While crossing one of these, we met a numerous band of the Meṭeyr Bedouins, once masters and tyrants of north-eastern Nejed, now, like their brother nomades, humble subjects of Wahhabee rule, and even drilled into a sort of equivocal orthodoxy, which, however, when at a safe distance from the centre of authority, they every now and then throw off, crying out, "Baṭelna-l-Islam," "Baṭelna-ṣ-Ṣalah," "we have done with Islam," "we have done with the prayer," meaning the five legal daily prayers of the Mahometans. They are comparatively rich in herds and flocks, and range over a wide extent of territory; indeed we shall a few chapters later meet with a colony of them on the other side of the Persian Gulf. This was the only considerable body of Bedouins that we saw from Ḥā'yel to Riaḍ, nor did I witness any other throughout Nejed, Ḥaṣa, and 'Omān.

I will here anticipate our first interview with some of the nomades of Benoo-Ḳaḥṭān, which, in fact, occurred next day. The origin of this tribe is from Yemen, and they form part not of the northern or Ismaelitic, but of the southern or Ḳaḥṭanic Arab family. I will not yet enter into the question of nomenclature, and of its historical foundation; the fact of the great bipartition of the Arab race is certain, and will be further illustrated in the progress of this work. The individuals whom we now met were strikingly unlike in appearance, manner, and dialect to the Bedouins of Shomer and Nejed; their stature was small and slender, almost approaching to the Indian type, their tone of voice low, and their whole deportment much gentler than that of the northern nomades,

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who love to affect a boisterous roughness of deportment often amounting to a bullying swagger, whereas the southerners take a measured and somewhat submissive tone. Their dialect, too, was unmistakably different, not only in the pronunciation of what one may call the "debatable" consonants of Arabic, namely, "Djeem," "Ḳaf," and "Kaf," but in the words themselves. The proverbs of Meidanee, and certain pieces in the Ḥamaṣa of Aboo Temmam, may give the learned reader a fair idea of this idiom. More copious yet less elegant, it is to the Arabic of the Coran much what the Greek of Homer is to that of Isocrates or Xenophon. We held a long conversation with these men; they were three in number, and, they said, travellers from Wadi Seleyyel, that is, from the angle lying between Dowāsir and Wadi Nejrān. Omitting for the moment several details regarding the geography of that corner of the Wahhabee empire, and the Ḳaḥṭanite Arabs in general, I will only add here that this particular tribe, the Benoo-Ḳaḥṭān, are widely disseminated, and split up into many subdivisions; some occupying the southerly pastures of Nejed beyond the 'Aared, others making their residence in Yemen. They are considered to be less warlike than the northern clans, for instance, Meṭeyr, Ajmān, and 'Oṭeybah, and are certainly inferior to them in physical build and energy.

We had not long traversed the Meṭeyr encampment, when we came in view of the walls of Toweym, a large town, containing between twelve and fifteen thousand inhabitants, according to the computation here in use, and which I follow for want of better. It is less advantageously situated for irrigation than Mejmaa', and decidedly colder in climate, being high perched at the level, not of the first, but of the second plateau, and surrounded by irregular piles of the third and loftiest range, though at some little distance. The actual governor, the successor or supplanter of the Sedeyrees (I forget his name), showed himself by no means sociable. Aboo-'Eysa and myself rode for some time up and down the narrow streets of the town, looking for a subordinate to announce our arrival to his excellency, and finding none; and when at last the message was delivered, hospitality was slow in forthcoming; the palace door remained shut, and the governor was evidently loth to

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introduce us into the interior; whether he feared our seeing its nakedness or its plenty I cannot tell. Ultimately he distributed us for lodging amid the dwellings of his attendants: the Nā'ib and his suite were in one of these subordinate K'hāwahs, ourselves in another, the Meccans in a third; Aboo-'Eysa went and came between. Our vicarious host was a coarse good-humoured man of arms, and treated us well. But the lane where his house stood was close and narrow, and the air oppressive; so, after taking coffee and eating a few dates of the long-shaped yellow variety almost peculiar to Nejed, Barakāt and I sauntered out to see the town.

The houses are here built compactly, of two storeys in general, sometimes three; the lower rooms are often fifteen or sixteen feet high, and the upper ten or twelve; while the roof itself is frequently surrounded by a blind wall of six feet or more, till the whole attains an altitude equal to that of many London domiciles, and is not altogether unimposing. Little or no attempt is, however, made at domestic ornament, and hardly any symmetry is observed between house and house except what mere chance circumstances may have determined. The streets are narrow and tortuous—mere lanes the most; and a committee for city ventilation would do no harm. I need not say that in this unrainy climate the roads are very seldom paved, nor indeed need to be, save in some limited instances.

The market-place of Toweym is unusually large, a very respectable square, and by an arrangement of rare occurrence situated close to the inner side of the town walls, not in the centre of the city. Here are several shops and warehouses, and a large mosque; but the want of minarets and cupolas deprives religious constructions in Nejed of the outward advantages of appearance they possess elsewhere; the Mesjid (literally, "prostration place") of Toweym resembled a large railway station more than anything else, but differed from such in having no refreshment room, unless, indeed, the side-building destined for cold-water ablution might merit that title. The town gates are strong for the country, guarded by day and shut by night; the walls in tolerably good repair, and surrounded with a deep outer trench, but no water.

As sunset approached, we went out of the town to look at

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the fields and groves; the soil hereabouts is good, but water is scarce; however, the dates are excellent. While we sat on a little hillock commanding the road, we had plenty of opportunity for conversation with the numerous passers-by, in and out of the town, for villages are thickly clustered on all sides; it is, by Arabian standard, a populous land. We profited by the native eloquence and classic dialect of the inhabitants, especially the townsmen, and did our best to draw them out into such conversation as should make them show their real dispositions. They were of a truth genuine Wahhabees, and heart and soul devoted to Feyṣul and his family. Possibly some little local grudges against Mejmaa' and the Sedeyree may have contributed to their satisfaction with a more immediate dependence on Riaḍ, and beyond a doubt they have made considerable progress in numbers and opulence during late years. At nightfall we returned home to our supper, sent from the governor's palace; it was neither very good nor very bad; the bread was leavened, as we found it henceforth to the Persian Gulf—a great improvement on the unleavened cakes of Shomer and Ḳaseem, though in Ḳaseem too the passage of the Persian pilgrims tends to set up a new and better custom. Lastly, a quiet pipe on the roof under the bright stars, and then to rest, but indoors, for it was too cold for open air sleeping. It is a great blessing in Arabia that neither gnats nor mosquitoes, nor a certain saltatory insect very common in Southern Europe and in Syria ("letters four do form its name") are here known. The absence also of flies, great and small, horse and house, is astonishing; I know of no other country in the world so totally devoid of that most familiar and often importunate little creature. Would one could say the same of another familiar beast, which signifies love, at least in Welsh heraldry! Snakes in Nejed are no less rare than in Ireland or Malta. In an elegant romance published by M. Lamartine under the title of the "Journal of Fath-Allah Sey'yir," companion of the ill-fated Lascaris, a work already alluded to, these reptiles are spoken of as very common in Central Arabia; nay, appalling to think of, M. Lamartine's hero discovers a whole thicket full of their sloughs, of all colours and sizes—a sort of serpent's cloak-room, I suppose. Happy the travellers who possess so rich and so

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inventive an imagination! a few boa-constrictors make no bad variety, at least in a narrative. But I was not favoured with any such visions, "nol vidi, nē credo che sia."

Early next day we took leave of our unsociable host, who however, did us the honour of stepping down to his palace gate and seeing us off in person. At a short distance from Toweym we passed another large village with battlemented walls, and on the opposite side of the road a square castle, looking very mediæval; this was Ḥafr. Our companions from Toweym said that the place had been formerly a rival of theirs, and for years had waged a petty war against them, doubtless much to the detriment of both parties. But under the rule of Ebn-Sa'ood "there is no other plunderer but he," and the inhabitants of Sedeyr are bound over to keep the peace with each other, and so far certainly to their common advantage. A couple of hours farther on we reached Thomeyr, a straggling townlet, more abounding in broken walls than houses; close by was a tall white rock crowned by the picturesque remains of an old outwork or fort, overlooking the place. Here our party halted for breakfast in the shadow of the ruins. Barakāt and myself determined to try our fortune in the village itself; no guards appeared at its open gate, we entered unchallenged, and roamed through silent lanes and heaps of rubbish, vainly seeking news of milk and dates in this city of the dead. At last we met a meagre townsman, in look and apparel the apothecary of Romeo; and of him, not without misgivings of heart, we enquired where aught eatable could be had for love or money. He apologized, though there was scarce need of that, for not having any such article at his disposal; "but," added he, "in such and such a house there will certainly be something good," and thitherwards he preceded us in our search. We found indeed a large dwelling, but the door was shut; we knocked to no purpose; nobody at home. Our man now set us a bolder example, and we all together scrambled through a breach in the mud wall, and found ourselves amid empty rooms and a desolate courtyard. "Everybody is out in the fields, women only excepted," said our guide, and we separated no better off than before. Despairing of the village commissariat, we climbed a turret on the outer walls, and looked round. Now we saw at some distance a beautiful

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palm-grove, where we concluded that dates could not be wanting, and off we set for it across the stubble-fields. But on arriving we found our paradise surrounded by high walls, and no gate discoverable. While thus we stood without, like Milton's fiend at Eden, but unable, like him, "by one high bound to overleap all bound," up came a handsome Ṣolibah lad, all in rags, half walking, half dancing, in the devil-may-care way of his tribe. "Can you tell us which is the way in?" was our first question, pointing to the garden before us; and, "Shall I sing you a song?" was his first answer. "We don't want your songs, but dates: how are we to get at them?" we replied. "Or shall I perform you a dance?" answered the grinning young scoundrel, and forthwith began an Arabian polka-step, laughing all the while at our undisguised impatience. At last he condescended to show us the way, but no other than what befitted an orchard-robbing boy, like himself, for it lay a little farther off, right over the wall, which he scaled with practised ingenuity, and helped us to follow. So we did, though perhaps with honester intentions, and, once within, stood amid trees, shade, and water. The "tender juvenile" then set up a shout, and soon a man appeared, "old Adam's likeness set to dress this garden," save that he was not old but young, as Adam might himself have been while yet in Eden. We were somewhat afraid of a surly reception, too well merited by our very equivocal introduction; but the gardener was better tempered than many of his caste, and after saluting us very politely, offered his services at our disposal. On learning that we were from Damascus, he grew positively friendly, led us through an umbrageous alley to a little lodge or watch-hut in the enclosure, and there presented us to a cousin of his, who also said he had been to "Shām," or Damascus. But "Shām" has in Nejed as loose an application as Nejed has in Shām, and we found ere long that our new acquaintance had never really overpassed the limits of Arabia; he had only gone some way on the northern pilgrim road towards Tabook and its neighbourhood; however, this was enough to make him a lion in his village, and he was a great authority about Damascus, though he had stopped short at a full fortnight's distance from its gates. We made friends, and a very tolerable extemporary breakfast of curds and dates, with clear cold water, such as our hearts

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desired, was set before us. The young Ṣolibah had gone fruit-hunting on his own account. We then proposed to purchase a stock of dates for our onward way, whereon the gardener conducted us to an outhouse where heaps of three or four kinds of this fruit, red and yellow, round or long, lay piled up, and bade us choose. At his recommendation we filled a large cloth which we had brought with us for the purpose with excellent ruddy dates, and gave in return a small piece of money, welcome here as elsewhere. We then took leave and returned, but this time through the garden gate, to the stubble-fields, and passing under the broken walls of the village, reached our companions, who had become anxious at our absence; and Aboo-'Eysa gave us in private a long lecture on prudence and circumspection in Wahhabee lands, very suitable, but from which, as is commonly the case, we seldom profited till it was too late.

Leaving Thomeyr, we climbed the highest shelf of Central Ṭoweyḳ, and traversed its bare upper ledge or table-land; the view all around was splendid, and forced the admiration of the Nā'ib himself, though little disposed to praise anything in Nejed. Only to the east lofty mountain-lines limited the prospect; south, west, and north, plateau and plain lay below in a bird's-eye landscape of immense extent. This district comprises, to the best of my observation, the most elevated point of inner Arabia, which I should place at about fifteen or twenty miles south-east of Thomeyr. The pass through which our road lay is called "Theneeyat-'Aṭālah," that is, "the barren," though often simply known by the autonomastic designation of "Eth-Theneeyah," or "*the* pass" *par excellence*, because the highest in the land. The easterly mountain is "Djebel Aṭālah" itself, berhymed in Arab song. Here stands Yabroon, a town once, it would seem, of some importance, now dwindled to a mere village, and only mentioned to me by the natives as marking the extremity of the Soley' valley in its northerly intersection of Ṭoweyḳ, and on account of a fair occasionally held there in the course of the year.

Our path, a very stony one, led for three or four hours along the ridge; nor was it till late in the afternoon that we began to descend a very steep and slippery track, amid marl and grey-stone intermixed, till step by step we reached the lower level,

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the same on which we had travelled the day before. All were heartily tired; the camels after so prolonged a march laboured heavily in their tread, and the Nā'ib gave vent to his ill temper by a furious quarrel with his men; the occasion was a pomegranate, which he had eaten alone without offering them a share: *hinc iræ et lacrymæ.* I mention this for a sample of many similar squalls that ruffled the placidity of the Shiya'ee band. But it is only justice to say that Moḥammed-'Alee's better mood soon returned, and he was then heartily ashamed of his own past indecorum.

Amid such alternations within and without, we were in all cases obliged to push smartly on if we wished to reach in time Ṣadiḳ, our destined night's halt. And at last we caught a glimpse of it amid uneven ground, just after threading a pretty knot of small hills, where couching gazelles started up on our approach and ran away; but evening was now far advanced, nor did we come under the walls till dark. A clean sandy space, hard by a well, and sheltered around by lofty palm-trees, afforded us a halting place. Here all alighted, while Aboo-'Eysa alone entered the town to give its governor notice of our arrival. He very courteously invited us, great and small, to his residence, despite the lateness of the hour. But the Nā'ib, dead tired, refused to rise from his carpets where he had flung him down; the sand was soft, and the night air not over cold. Accordingly the governor sent us out where we were a supply of meat, curds, honey, melons, and bread, enough for a good supper, to which the Arabs added coffee and the Persians tea. Somewhere about midnight we made a hearty meal by the light of our fires, and bivouacked beside them.

Aboo-'Eysa knew, though he would not say, that next day's march was almost equal in length to the preceding one. In spite of all remonstrances from the jaded travellers, he put us by dawn in movement, and we left Ṣadiḳ without having seen the inside of its walls. Those of the party who had visited it on former occasions, stated it to be a considerable village, a small town, in fact, equal to Mejmaa'. We had not gone far on our way when the chief's own brother, in a handsome red dress, and accompanied by some swordsmen of his train, rode after us to beg us to retrace our steps and honour his abode by partaking

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therein of an early dinner. But want of leisure rendered this impossible; so we thanked him for his offer, and he returned, after smoking a furtive pipe with Barakāt and myself.

The road now wound between shrubs and bushes, where hares and partridges abounded; the Nā'ib had slung to his saddle a good double-barrelled English fowling-piece, brought from India; but though he talked much and big about his gun and his sporting achievements, we could nohow persuade him to make use of it on this or any other occasion, whence my readers will, I fear, draw the same inference that we did, namely, that he was no great shot. A hare now crossed our path, and gave rise to a fierce dispute between the Sonnees and Shiya'ees of our party, touching the lawfulness of eating hare's flesh. The Sonnees, at least those of the Ḥanbalee sect, to which all Nejdeans belong, whether Wahhabees or not, hold swine's flesh alone to be forbidden them; but the Shiya'ees have a prohibitory list of almost or quite as many articles as the Jews themselves, and among these puss is included. These sectaries do not indeed plead guilty to copying in this or in any other respect the children of Israel, for whom they profess, equally with the Sonnees, supreme dislike and contempt; acting in virtue, they say, of certain traditions, handed down from their demigods, 'Alee, Ḥoseyn, Zeyn-el-'Abideen, Djaa'fer, and the like, and founded on trivial analogies or mystical confusion of ideas. Thus, for the illegality of hare's meat they adduce a special reason, too stupid by far, and too coarse to be recorded here. I do not wonder at the great progress of Pantheism or Materialism, whether under the name of Babism or any other, among the Shiya'ees, now and in former times, so full is their current system of the sheerest practical and theoretical absurdity, though with occasional glimpses too of high and noble truths, but all distorted and overlaid with an incrustation of Iranian folly. The present controversy ran high, and nothing was wanting to bring it to a matter-of-fact issue except the essential article of a certain well-known receipt, "first catch your hare;" but the Nā'ib's backwardness in fulfilling that, left matters at the degree of theory only, much to Barakāt's regret and mine, a feeling wherein our Nejdean companions heartily sympathized.

Issuing from the Arcadian labyrinth of rock and shrubbery,

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we came before noon on an open plain, and had on our right hand the town of Ḥoolah, a large and busy locality; the size and outline of its towered walls reminded me of Conway Castle, but the construction differs, being here almost wholly of sun-dried bricks, with little stone, and that unhewn. This town, men say, is one of the most flourishing in Sedeyr; perhaps its comparative proximity to Shaḳra and the Woshem road contributes to its prosperity. The inhabitants are not only active traders but diligent agriculturists, and the country around is planted and tilled to a notable distance. Ḥoolah, like many other villages hereabouts, has decidedly improved under Wahhabee rule, and that from two main causes: the first is the cessation of local rivalries and frontier feuds; the second the increased importance of the central districts in general, and hence a correlative influx of wealth and commerce. These advantages are common to the whole circle of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, including the five genuine Nejdean provinces, namely Sedeyr, Woshem, 'Aareḍ, Yemāmah, and Aflāj, nor is even Wadi Dowāsir absolutely excluded. So poor indeed was Nejed, so ruinously subdivided, so cut off from the world around, and overrun by pilfering nomades or tyrannized by petty chieflets a century ago, that any change soever could hardly fail to prove a bettering for the land, then at its very nadir in every respect. And thus a central and national government, strong enough to maintain order at home, and to draw in the wealth and strength of richer lands without, has of course been for Nejed a great and positive gain. Imagine, for example's sake, that Switzerland, with her rocky cantons, suddenly became mistress and centre of government for Italy on the south, and the whole German Confederation and Rhenish provinces to the north. Germany indeed, and Italy, would be little likely to benefit from such a transaction; but the Swiss provinces would certainly rise in wealth and importance, at any rate for a time. In the same manner the opulent lands of Ḥaṣa, Ḳaṭeef, Ḳaseem, and the like, are real sufferers from their forced annexation to Nejed, and, in vulgar phrase, "pay the piper," while Nejed herself profits by their losses, and battens on their fat and increase. But to resume our itinerary.

We left behind us many other villages and hamlets of less

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note, near and far, till after a few hours of very pretty road over the undulations of the plateau, now mounting, now descending its whitened ledges, we reached at sunset the town of Ḥoreymelah where we were to pass the evening.

This town, the birthplace of the well-known Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb, founder and name-giver of the sect now dominant throughout nearly half Arabia, forms the northerly wicket-gate or key to the central stronghold of Nejed, guarded in like fashion by Shaḳra to the west, Kharfah to the south, and the defile of Wadi Soley' to the east; four localities that occupy the corresponding entrances to the famous valley once Wadi Moseylemah, now by name Wadi Ḥaneefah, in whose deep labyrinth lies the capital, and the very heart of Nejed. Ḥoreymelah is situated almost on the boundary line between 'Aared and Sedeyr, but belongs to the latter. It blocks up the funnel-like end of the gorge through which we had been travelling half the day, with just enough open space around for the customary plantation-halo of a Nejdean town; the outer fortifications are, as beseems the position, remarkably strong, and the population about ten thousand in number. What most surprised me on our first entrance here, was the view of a large castle, placed on a rising ground within the town itself, and announcing in its symmetrical construction a degree of architectural and defensive science unusual in these countries. My wonder was however lessened on learning that this fortress was the work of Ibraheem Bacha, erected during the Egyptian occupation of Nejed subsequent to the fall of Ḍerey'eeyah. Young though Ibraheem then was, his fertile mind had already conceived the system which in after years covered Syria and the north with monuments of his prodigious energy, and of his consummate skill in everywhere selecting for his strategic constructions precisely the points best at once for securing subjection and barring invasion. Similar vestiges of the great Basha yet stand, though dismantled, at Ḥoms, at Baa'lbec, at Antioch, at Nebk, and other places out of number, to attest alike the talent of the Egyptian who reared them and the supine negligence and apathetic folly of the Ottoman who has abandoned them to decay. The castle of Ḥoreymelah was the first of Ibraheem's strong posts

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that I saw in Nejed, but we met with more farther on; and I was told that other like works of his yet exist in Woshem and on the skirts of Ḳaseem, but my line of route did not permit me to visit them.

Beṭaḥ, a native of the town and a zealous Wahhabee, heart and soul devoted to the interests of the Sa'ood family, was governor here. He was of good parentage, and not deficient in the kind of education peculiar to his country and sect; he received us very courteously, and introduced us without delay into his spacious abode within the castle. But the evening was warm, almost close, and after a few minutes of ceremony in the Ḳ'hāwah, we unanimously voted for the open air. Carpets were accordingly spread and cushions arranged on the large flat roof above the second storey, and thither we mounted by a flight of stone steps, ill-lighted, and particularly fit to break the necks of those who should venture on them at night time. On one side of the roof a third storey rose higher still, and the parapet against which we reclined our weary backs overhung the central market-place of the town.

Our host was a retainer and a personal friend of 'Abd-Allah, son of Feyṣul, and, if we take his word, had accompanied the prince in no less than thirty military expeditions. Many were the anecdotes he recounted touching the prowess of the heir apparent, but I reserve them for the history of the Sa'ood family in a following chapter. My own thoughts were at the moment much more occupied with the memory of the extraordinary man who, born in this corner of the earth, had lived to exercise over his countrymen an influence equal to that of his compatriot Moseylemah in old times, nay, almost of his yet more famous namesake Moḥammed or Mahomet himself.

Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb, founder of the sect named after him Wahhabees, was born in Ḥoreymelah somewhat before the middle of the last century. His ancestral origin, a circumstance never "lightly touched, much less forgot," by Arab biographers, was from the Mesaleekh, a powerful clan, whose nomade branch still frequents the neighbourhood of Zobeyr and the north-west of the Persian Gulf. Like many Nejdeans of the better sort, he began life as a travelling merchant, and his first excursions were in the direction of Baṣrah and Bagdad.

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That he visited Persia also, India, and even Constantinople, according to the statements of some writers, is at least wholly unconfirmed by local tradition, my only guide and authority in this sketch. Commerce ultimately led him to Damascus, where he fell in with some of the learned and very bigoted sheykhs of that town, Ḥanbelees like himself, or Shāfi'ees, but alike opposed whether to the prevailing laxities of the Naḳshbundees and other northern free-thinkers, or to the superstitious practices of Darweeshes, Faḳeers, Welees, and whatever else Persian or Turkish ideas have introduced almost everywhere in the East. The son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb was above thirty years of age, and in the full vigour of his physical and intellectual existence, a vigour much above the average standard. To the persevering doggedness and patient courage of his Nejdean countrymen, he added a power of abstraction and generalization rare among them; his eye was observant and his ear attentive, he had already seen much and reflected deeply. But the lessons of the Damascene sheykhs aided him to combine once for all, and to render precise, notions that he had long before, it seems, entertained in a floating and unsystematized condition. He now learned to distinguish clearly between the essential elements of Islam and its accidental or recent admixtures, and at last found himself in possession of what had been the primal view and starting-point of the Prophet and his first companions in Ḥejāz twelve ages before.

To appreciate accurately and distinctly the innermost thought and purpose of the first founder of a sect at more than a thousand years' distance, and through all the complicated strata of orthodoxy and heterodoxy laid over it by parties and commentators, by times and races, is no easy task, nor is every eye capable of so keen a view, nor every mind of so comprehensive a grasp. This requires uncommon analytic and deductive power, with that intuitive tact which few possess, and which forms the basis of what men call genius in every science or art. Strength of will, nay, audacity itself, is no less needful too than strength of intellect. All these Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb united in eminent measure. To him is the praise, if praise it be, of having discovered amid the ruins of the Islamitic pile its neglected keystone, and, harder still, of having dared to form

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the project to replace it, and with it and by it reconstruct the broken fabric.

This keystone, this master-thought, this parent idea, of which all the rest is but the necessary and inevitable deduction, is contained in the phrase, far oftener repeated than understood, "La Ilāh illa Allāh," "there is no god but God." A literal translation, but much too narrow for the Arab formula, and quite inadequate to render its true force in an Arab mouth or mind.

"There is no god but God" are words simply tantamount in English to the negation of any deity save one alone; and thus much they certainly mean in Arabic, but they imply much more also. Their full sense is, not only to deny absolutely and unreservedly all plurality whether of nature or of person in the Supreme Being, not only to establish the unity of the Unbegetting and Unbegot, in all its simple and uncommunicable Oneness, but besides this the words, in Arabic, and among Arabs, imply that this one Supreme Being is also the only Agent, the only Force, the only Act existing throughout the universe, and leave to all beings else, matter or spirit, instinct or intelligence, physical or moral, nothing but pure unconditional passiveness, alike in movement or in quiescence, in action or in capacity. The sole power, the sole motor, movement, energy, and deed, is God; the rest is downright inertia and mere instrumentality, from the highest archangel down to the simplest atom of creation. Hence, in this one sentence, "La Ilāh illa Allāh," is summed up a system which, for want of a better name, I may be permitted to call the Pantheism of Force, or of Act, thus exclusively assigned to God, Who absorbs it all, exercises it all, and to Whom alone it can be ascribed, whether for preserving or for destroying, for relative evil or for equally relative good. I say "relative," because it is clear that in such a theology no place is left for absolute good or evil, reason or extravagance; all is abridged in the autocratical will of the one great Agent: "sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas;" or, more significantly still, in Arabic, "Kemā yesha'o," "as He wills it," to quote the constantly recurring expression of the Coran.

Thus immeasurably and eternally exalted above, and dissimilar

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from, all creatures, which lie levelled before Him on one common plane of instrumentality and inertness, God is One in the totality of omnipotent and omnipresent action, which acknowledges no rule, standard, or limit, save His own sole and absolute will. He communicates nothing to His creatures, for their seeming power and act ever remain His alone, and in return He receives nothing from them; for whatever they may be, that they are in Him, by Him, and from Him only. And secondly, no superiority, no distinction, no preeminence, can be lawfully claimed by one creature over its fellow, in the utter equalisation of their unexceptional servitude and abasement; all are alike tools of the one solitary Force which employs them to crush or to benefit, to truth or to error, to honour or shame, to happiness or misery, quite independently of their individual fitness, deserts, or advantage, and simply because He wills it, and as He wills it.

One might at first sight think that this tremendous Autocrat, this uncontrolled and unsympathizing Power, would be far above anything like passions, desires, or inclinations. Yet such is not the case, for He has with respect to His creatures one main feeling and source of action, namely, jealousy of them, lest they should perchance attribute to themselves something of what is His alone, and thus encroach on His all-engrossing kingdom. Hence He is ever more prone to punish than to reward, to inflict pain than to bestow pleasure, to ruin than to build. It is His singular satisfaction to let created beings continually feel that they are nothing else than His slaves, His tools, and contemptible tools also, that thus they may the better acknowledge His superiority, and know His power to be above their power, His cunning above their cunning, His will above their will, His pride above their pride; or rather, that there is no power, cunning, will, or pride save His own.

But He Himself, sterile in His inaccessible height, neither loving nor enjoying aught save His own and self-measured decree, without son, companion, or counsellor, is no less barren for Himself than for His creatures, and His own barrenness and lone egoism in Himself is the cause and rule of His indifferent and unregarding despotism around. The first note is the key of the whole tune, and the primal idea of God runs through and modifies the whole system and creed that centres in Him.

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That the notion here given of the Deity, monstrous and blasphemous as it may appear, is exactly and literally that which the Coran conveys or intends to convey, I at present take for granted. But that it indeed is so, no one who has attentively perused and thought over the Arabic text (for mere cursory reading, especially in a translation, will not suffice), can hesitate to allow. In fact, every phrase of the preceding sentences, every touch in this odious portrait has been taken, to the best of my ability, word for word, or at least meaning for meaning, from the "Book," the truest mirror of the mind and scope of its writer.

And that such was in reality Mahomet's mind and idea is fully confirmed by the witness-tongue of contemporary tradition. Of this we have many authentic samples: the Ṣaḥeeḥ, the Commentaries of Beyḍāwee, the Mishkat-el-Meṣabeeḥ, and fifty similar works, afford ample testimony on this point. But for the benefit of my readers in general, all of whom may not have drunk equally deep at the fountain-heads of Islamitic dogma, I will subjoin a specimen, known perhaps to many Orientalists, yet too characteristic to be here omitted, a repetition of which I have endured times out of number from admiring and approving Wahhabees in Nejed.

Accordingly, when God—so runs the tradition; I had better said, the blasphemy—resolved to create the human race, He took into His hands a mass of earth, the same whence all mankind were to be formed, and in which they after a manner pre-existed; and having then divided the clod into two equal portions, He threw the one half into hell, saying, "These to eternal fire, and I care not;" and projected the other half into heaven, adding, "and these to Paradise, and I care not."

Commentary would here be superfluous. But in this we have before us the adequate idea of predestination, or, to give it a truer name, pre-damnation, held and taught in the school of the Coran. Paradise and hell are at once totally independent of love or hatred on the part of the Deity, and of merits or demerits, of good or evil conduct, on the part of the creature; and, in the corresponding theory, rightly so, since the very actions which we call good or ill-deserving, right or wrong, wicked or virtuous, are in their essence all one and of one, and

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accordingly merit neither praise nor blame, punishment or recompense, except and simply after the arbitrary value which the all-regulating will of the great despot may choose to assign or impute to them. In a word, He burns one individual through all eternity amid red-hot chains and seas of molten fire, and seats another in the plenary enjoyment of an everlasting brothel between forty celestial concubines, just and equally for His own good pleasure, and because He wills it.

Men are thus all on one common level, here and hereafter, in their physical, social, and moral light—the level of slaves to one sole Master, of tools to one universal Agent. But the equalizing process does not stop here: beasts, birds, fishes, insects, all participate of the same honour or debasement; all are, like man, the slaves of God, the tools and automata of His will; and hence Mahomet is simply logical and self-consistent when in the Coran he informs his followers, that birds, beasts, and the rest are "nations" like themselves, nor does any intrinsic distinction exist between them and the human species, except what accidental diversity the "King, the Proud One, the Mighty, the Giant," &c., as he styles his God, may have been pleased to make, just as He willed it, and so long as He may will it.

However, should any one think himself aggrieved by such association, he may console himself by reflecting that, on the other hand, angels, archangels, genii, devils, and whatever other spiritual beings may exist, are no less on his level also; and that if he himself be no better than a camel, he is, however, no worse than Gabriel or any seraph. And then, over all and above all, "La Ilāh illa Allāh," "there is no god but God."

Human nature is sometimes blamed for its inconsistency: were it not for that very inconsistency, it would often be much more worthy of blame. The best men are inconsistent, and the worst are no less so; and this is just what renders the good endurable, and the bad tolerable.

> Who keeps a spirit wholly true
> To that ideal which he bears?

No man ever acted up to his theory, and it is well; for excellent though his theory may be, it is still theory, and needs the qualification of circumstance; nay more, no man ever was or will be in theory perfectly consistent with his theory itself; and

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these deviations are precisely what in general saves it from absurdity. The same remark applies to error and evil: total error is fortunately no less impossible than total wickedness and depravity. Mind and morals may be far gone, yet have always some lucid intervals, some redeeming features. My readers will hence understand that in the plan above traced of the Mahometan theory as embodied in the Coran, I have only intended to convey the leading idea, to pourtray the ruling lineaments, to analyse the ultimate and essential constituents, without taking into account healthier but unhomogeneous admixtures, and anomalous touches of better grace. Such undoubtedly exist in the Coran itself, and others are recorded by credible tradition; happy inconsistencies where the Prophet degenerated upwards into a man; and the Coran forgot itself for a moment to become almost reasonable and human. But these are after all heteroclite exceptions, and can then only be adduced in opposition to the great scheme of the work and its writer, when one feeble line shall prove Shakespeare no poet, or one devout phrase indict Voltaire of Christianity. "Nemo mortalium omnibus horis," &c., and that is all.

Neglect of this discrimination has led some apologists into eulogies of Mahomet which Mahomet himself would have been the first to reject; to transform the "Messenger of God" into a philanthropist, and the Coran into a gospel. To this end detached sentences have been at times assumed for criteria of the whole work, and rare anomalies brought forward as the general and dominant tenor of the Prophet's life and writings. I do not wonder at it: "the Devil can quote Scripture for his purpose," and angels may the Coran for theirs. But ordinary men would do well to take matters as they stand, and to give each his due according to what he really meant, not according to what they would wish him to mean. Thus much may suffice to meet half way a certain class of objections, more ably put forward, I think, than firmly founded. Let us now return to the subject in hand.

What system of morality or government, what social code or political institutions, what life and ways may be built up on the foundation, and deduced from the principles laid down in the Coran, need not be matters of speculation. "The worshipper models himself on what he worships," is an Arab proverb no

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less true in religion than in love; history confirms the axiom; and fifty days passed at Riad will in the following chapters illustrate the condition of a land where these doctrines have prevailed for a century with all the concentrated unity of thought and purpose proper to Nejdeans, and fostered by the isolated position of their native country. The tree is best known by its fruits; and should any of my readers, though I should be reluctant to suppose it, yet hesitate between approval and rejection of Coranic theology, its practical results and outworking in the Wahhabee capital may help him to make up his mind.

All we are at present concerned with is that such is the pervading idea, the central figure, the master or mother thought, in brief, the keystone of Islam, as Mahomet conceived it and as the Wahhabee understood it. Later doctrines and schools, introducing now free will, now merit, now hierarchical institutions and mutual dependence of man on man, now devising intercessors and mediators, living or dead, selecting holy places, honouring saints and tombs, framing ascetic brotherhoods and darweesh associations, were by the Wahhabee recognized henceforth in their true light, from his point of view, as innovations, corruptions, and distortions of the great and simple vision of one solitary autocrat, over one even mass of undistinguished and undistinguishable slaves.

This deduction was eminently logical. How, in fact, can the Absolute leave room for intercessors, or the Uncommunicable admit of a hierarchy linking the creature with the Creator? what free will can find place in a passive automaton? or what meaning can be attached to ascetic practices and good works when the universal Lord and Ruler has declared that He cares not what His slaves may do, or to what He destines them? To suppose sanctity or distinction in a creature, is an invasion of the all-absorbing rights of the Creator; and neither place nor title can avail where the beast and the archangel, heaven and hell, are all the same before and below the unmoved and inaccessible One. That Mahomet had thus thought and acted accordingly whenever these heretical deviations came under his notice, the son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb well knew; and very fairly inferred that he would have looked upon with equal abhorrence

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and treated with no less rigour the analogous corruptions and overlayings of later times.

But if the theoretical conclusion was inevitable, the practical application was no less evident. Henceforth, thus reasoned the Wahhabee reformer, the line was to be drawn at the life of Mahomet himself, and of those who, from their intimate and personal association, might be considered as forming one with the Prophet himself: the epoch of the Ṣaḥḥābah was the extreme Rubicon of whatever Islam could approve and admit; all beyond incompatible and hostile. With the courage worthy of a great if not of a good cause, Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb resolved to consecrate the remainder of his life to the restoration of this primæval image of Islam, the Islam of Mahomet, of the Ṣaḥḥābah, and now his own; convinced that this alone was the true, the unerring, the heaven-revealed path, and all beside it mere human superaddition and, in Lord Bacon's famous phrase, Idols of the Cave.

Wrong, inevitably wrong, in his starting-point, he was right in all the rest; equally keen-sighted in his perceptions, just in his deductions, and honest in his aim. Self-consistency, though not always virtuous, is at least honourable; and whatever religion a man may profess, it is certainly more praiseworthy in him to hold it for what it really is and then act up to it, than to content himself with a vitiated dogma and an inadequate practice. Nor can a Mahometan, being such, receive other than praise when he looks for and follows out the authentic religion of Mahomet.

The position which the Wahhabee assumed in Mahometanism, and the exact nature of Mahometanism itself, will become yet clearer to my readers if they will permit me, though at the risk of prolonging the present digression, to take notice on my way of an incorrect idea, conveyed in an expression alike incorrect, yet often applied to this very subject. More than one writer, treating of this phase of Islam, has entitled it a "Mahometan Protestantism," and compared it with the religious movement of our own sixteenth century known as the "Reformation." Now the fact is, that between the mutual bearings of Mahometanism and Wahhabeeism on the one side, and of Christianity in general and dogmatic

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Protestantism (if I may use the words thus for the comparison's sake) on the other, there exists no real parallel, and the very slight analogy traceable is fanciful and delusive. The cases are wholly different; nor is the explanation far to seek.

The Wahhabee reformer formed the design of putting back the hour-hand of Islam to its starting-point; and so far he did well, for that hand was from the first meant to be fixed. Islam is in its essence stationary, and was framed thus to remain. Sterile like its God, lifeless like its first Principle and supreme Original in all that constitutes true life—for life is love, participation, and progress, and of these the Coranic Deity has none—it justly repudiates all change, all advance, all developement. To borrow the forcible words of Lord Houghton, the "written book" is there the "dead man's hand," stiff and motionless; whatever savours of vitality is by that alone convicted of heresy and defection.

But Christianity with its living and loving God, Begetter and Begotten, Spirit and Movement, nay more, a Creator made creature, the Maker and the made existing in One, a Divinity communicating itself by uninterrupted gradation and degree from the most intimate union far off to the faintest irradiation, though all that It has made for love and governs in love; One who calls His creatures not slaves, not servants, but friends, nay sons, nay gods—to sum up, a religion in whose seal and secret "God in man is one with man in God," must also be necessarily a religion of vitality, of progress, of advancement. The contrast between it and Islam is that of movement with fixedness, of participation with sterility, of developement with barrenness, of life with petrifaction. The first vital principle and the animating spirit of its birth must indeed abide ever the same, but the outer form must change with the changing days, and new offshoots of fresh sap and greenness be continually thrown out as witnesses to the vitality within, else were the Vine withered and the Branches dead. I have no intention here, it would be extremely out of place, of entering on the maze of controversy, or discussing whether any dogmatic attempt to reproduce the religious phase of a former age is likely to succeed. I only say that life supposes movement and growth, and both imply change; that to censure a living thing for

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growing and changing is absurd; and that to attempt to hinder it from so doing by pinning it down on a written label, or nailing it to a Procrustean framework, is tantamount to killing it altogether. Now Christianity is living, and because living must grow, must advance, must change, and was meant to do so; onwards and forwards is a condition of its very existence; and I cannot but think that those who do not recognize this, show themselves so far ignorant of its true nature and essence. On the other hand, Islam is lifeless, and because lifeless cannot grow, cannot advance, cannot change, and was never intended so to do; stand-still is its motto and its most essential condition; and therefore the son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb, in doing his best to bring it back to its primal simplicity, and making its goal of its starting-point, was so far in the right, and showed himself well acquainted with the nature and first principles of his religion.

These remarks also, while they vindicate the Nejdean reformer and his reform from misapplied parallelisms, may serve to give a yet clearer idea of Islam and of its Wahhabee revival. Erring indeed it was; but its error lay exclusively and unavoidably in the premises adopted, nohow in the conclusions.

With a head full of his project, and a heart set on carrying it into execution, Moḥammed the Wahhabee returned to his native Nejed, after an absence, so runs the tale, of six years, most of which he had passed in Damascus. Central Arabia was at that epoch divided between innumerable chiefs, of whom the most powerful were Ebn-Ma'ammer at 'Eyānah in Wadi Ḥaneefah, and Da'ās at the important locality of Manfooḥah in Kharj. But these, and with them all their brethren or rivals in authority, were subject in a general way to Ebn-Muflik, the successor of the Carmathian princes in Ḳaṭeef and Ḥaṣa. Almost every trace of Islam had long since vanished from Nejed, where the worship of the Djann, under the spreading foliage of large trees, or in the cavernous recesses of Djebel Ṭoweyḳ, along with the invocation of the dead and sacrifices at their tombs, was blended with remnants of old Sabæan superstition, not without positive traces of the doctrines of Moseylemah and Ḳermooṭ. The Coran was unread, the five daily prayers forgotten, and no one cared where Mecca lay, east or west, north or south; tithes, ablutions, and pilgrimages were

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things unheard of. Such was the political and religious condition of the land when the Wahhabee arrived, resolved to restore the days of the Prophet and the Ṣaḥḥābah among his backsliding countrymen, and confident of success. The event justified his hopes.

"Catch the fish by its head," says a vulgar but shrewd Arab proverb; and in accordance with its advice, Moḥammed left his birthplace Ḥoreymelah, to establish himself in the more important locality of 'Eyānah, under the immediate protection of its ruler, Ebn-Ma'ammer. Many and extravagant are the stories current in Nejed regarding the bygone greatness of 'Eyānah and the tyranny of its chiefs. Thus, I have heard it said that, on occasion of some frontier war or other, Ebn-Ma'ammer called out all the military force of his capital, and gave directions that every man a smith by trade, who chanced to be enlisted in the army, should cast down a leaden bullet at the town gate while the troops passed out of it; and that the bullets then and thus collected, and reckoned up, amounted to six hundred, being the number of blacksmiths alone in 'Eyānah. How large a population this supposes is easier to calculate than to believe. But putting these and similar exaggerations aside, it is certain that 'Eyānah was at that epoch the first city of Nejed, and probably inferior to none there existing at the present day in size and number of inhabitants; at least its ruins, surpassing in extent those of Ḍerey'eeyah itself, would seem to testify so much. Close by the town walls rose a monument marking the spot where a certain Sa'ad, a mythical hero of old times, was believed to be buried. This tomb and its real or imaginary tenant were the supreme object of popular veneration; Sa'ad engrossed all the prayers and religious honours of 'Eyanāh, his tomb was the palladium of the Nejdean capital, and here sacrifices were offered and sacred rites performed. Enough certainly to stir up a more sluggish spirit than that of the Wahhabee apostle.

But Moḥammed's zeal, though ardent, was not rash, and he well knew to bide patiently and prudently the slow developement of great designs. In the house where he now took up his quarters by the side of the market-place, he remained for a considerable time, leading a quiet and almost retired life, neither

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dogmatizing nor in any other way affecting to distinguish himself from those around. His personal character and travelled experience soon gained him that solid reputation and esteem which learning and gravity, combined with an eloquent yet prudent tongue, seldom fail to confer in Arabia, especially when such qualities are moreover supported by substantial wealth. All knew and respected him, and Ebn-Ma'ammer himself delighted to honour the Wahhabee.

At last Moḥammed felt that the moment was come to attempt the effectuation of his great scheme, nor could an occasion be long wanting. One evening, while he was sitting on his house-roof overlooking the market-place, a townsman who had lost a camel passed by beneath, invoking with a loud voice the local patron or demigod Sa'ad to restore him his stray beast. "W' lemā la tedaa'ŏ bi rabb' is-Sa'ad?" "And why do you not rather call on the God of Sa'ad?" exclaimed the Wahhabee, in a voice audible not only by the individual below, but by all comers and goers in the market and street. Language so unusual—for the like had not for centuries been heard in 'Eyānah—drew on enquiry, enquiry led to controversy and all its ordinary consequences. The ice was broken, the ship was launched, and soon the inhabitants of 'Eyānah were divided into two parties, this for Sa'ad, that for Islam; while every day added to the number and zeal of the disciples of the new teacher.

Ebn-Ma'ammer cared for none of these things, and took no apparent notice of the religious fermentation around. But some of the principal townsmen, more firmly attached to their old belief and customs, viewed the matter in a truer and more serious light. After having repeatedly attempted, but in vain, to arouse Ebn-Ma'ammer from his inaction, they sent notice to the supreme governor at Ḳaṭeef, Ebn-Muflik, acquainting him with the rapid spread of the novel dogma, and the culpable negligence of the local chief, and setting forth the danger of a revival of Islam, not in 'Eyānah only, but throughout Nejed.

Ebn-Muflik hated Mahometanism with the hatred of a Carmathian. He lost no time in sending his orders to Ebn-Ma'ammer, and commanded him to put a stop to the preaching,

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and to arrest the preacher; threatening him moreover with his worst anger should he continue to countenance the Wahhabee. But instead of a full compliance, which might yet in all probability have extinguished the rising flame, Ebn-Ma'ammer had recourse to one of those half measures which have in every age and land only fanned the proselytizing fire. He informed Moḥammed that he could no longer protect him, and recommended him to avoid the danger of arrest and its consequences by a timely departure from his territory.

This seeming check was in reality the turning tide of the Wahhabee's good fortune, and well did he take it. Barely six leagues distant from 'Eyānah, but situated in a different branch of Wadi Ḥaneefah, rose the stronghold of Ḍerey'eeyah, destined to a great celebrity and a terrible downfall. Here, surrounded by a small but energetic population, lived Sa'ood son of 'Abd-el-'Azeez, son of the elder Sa'ood, first chief of the district, and descended from the 'Anezah clan—not the 'Anezah of Syria, but a branch of the great family of Rabee'aá'l-Feres, through Asd, and near kin to Wā'il and Ṭaghleb. The present ruler, Sa'ood-eth-Thānee, or the second, was young, bold, and strong in the devoted attachment of his kinsmen and retainers. Placed between Ebn-Ma'ammer on his north, and Da'ās on the south-east, he was an object of jealousy to either, and his principality stood in considerable danger from its powerful and ill-disposed neighbours.

At Sa'ood's castle-gate Moḥammed now alighted, and claimed that protection which an Arab chief rarely refuses to a fugitive and a suppliant. But their mutual position was soon changed, and Sa'ood learned to look on his refugee with other eyes, when the Wahhabee, confiding in the ardent spirit and capacious mind of his young host, laid open before him a project fertile in consequences for this world and the next, explained its nature and resources, and concluded by saying, "Pledge me your word that you will make the cause of God your cause, and the sword of Islam your sword, and I will pledge you mine, that before your death you shall be sole monarch of Nejed, and the first potentate in Arabia."

Wild though such promises may seem to one unversed in

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the East and its denizens, Sa'ood saw the possibility of their fulfilment, and unhesitatingly accepted the offer. He professed Islam in all its purity "on the hand," to use an Arab phrase, that is, under the direction of the Wahhabee, and chose him to be henceforward his sole counsellor and guide. The example of the chief was naturally imitated by all of his kindred and retinue. This was about the year 1760.

With the enthusiasm of a proselyte and the ambition of a conqueror, Sa'ood now gave himself out as Apostle of the new doctrine and Sword of the Faith. In the name of God and Islam he attacked one after another his misbelieving neighbours, or requited their assaults by repulse followed closely by aggression, while to all he held forth, Mahomet-like, the option between the Coran and the sword. Weaker wills bent or broke, as they always must, before the stronger; Sa'ood and his men brought, in old Oliver's words, "a conscience to their work," and every year added to the territory of Derey'eeyah, and the number of the Wahhabee faction. Meanwhile its progress was concurrently favoured by the decline and ruin of 'Eyānah; an event brought about not by war or hostile intrigue, so far as I could learn, but by the operation of internal causes, and the decay that sooner or later attends misgovernment and despotism. The event itself is historical, but the Nejdean chroniclers have embodied it in a popular legend, which I give because it is illustrative of the Arab turn of mind, though I can hardly allow it any further value.

The tale runs thus. One morning as Ebn-Ma'ammer rode out to the chase, accompanied by a band of nobles and guardsmen, he met at the town gate a poor lad, the only son of a widow, bearing on his back a bundle of sticks just collected for sale in the market. Ebn-Ma'ammer was girt with a new and yet unproved sword. At the sight of the boy he turned to his retinue, and proposed in cruel jest to make a first trial of his weapon on the peasant before them. Not a voice was raised to protest against the barbarous design; and the chief, giving his horse a spring forward, drew his sword, and cut the unlucky lad asunder at a blow. The victim's aged mother had wit-

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nessed from a little distance this act of gratuitous barbarity. She came forward, stood in front of the tyrant's horse, and raising her hands to heaven called for vengeance on Ebn-Ma'ammer and all his race. From that hour, so follows the tradition, the wells throughout the valley dried up, the gardens withered, and in less than a year the chief and all his family perished by untimely ends, while the townsmen of 'Eyānah, scattered over the land, left their ruined capital a lasting memorial of crime and punishment. We shall subsequently meet with an analogous, but, I have reason to think, a more authentic narration, in the history of the Wahhabee kings.

Against Da'ās, the despot of Yemāmah, Sa'ood waged a long and doubtful war. At last Islam triumphed, and southern Nejed was, for a while, entirely subdued. Here too the *deus ex machinâ* is not omitted in the Arab version of events, and the final defeat and overthrow of the enemy is ascribed to a miraculous earthquake, and the terror it caused amid the troops of the unbelievers. Da'ās fled to Ḳaṭeef and died there.

Meanwhile Ebn-Muflik had been succeeded in the Carmathian principality by his son 'Arār. True to the eternal hatred vowed by his sect against the followers of Mahomet, he sent more than once numerous armies to crush the new Islam, and even, if one account be correct, entered Nejed in person, and besieged Ḍerey'eeyah. But of the circumstances which signalized this decisive struggle between Sa'ood and 'Arār, I could learn nothing worth record. After sustaining a bloody and total discomfiture, 'Arār is said to have escaped alone across the Dahnā, whose sands devoured whatever of his army the sword of the Wahhabee had spared, intrenching himself in the fort of Ḳaṭeef, where he died soon after of a broken heart. But his relations defended the town, and continued the government in the name of the family.

Master of the central provinces, Sa'ood next turned his arms against more distant and opulent regions; Ḳaseem and Ḥaṣa, Dowāsir and Seleyyel were by him added to the Wahhabee empire, though Ḳaṭeef and its Carmathian garrison resisted during his reign. But with this single exception, all that lies between the frontiers of Mecca and the Persian Gulf had been conquered by the chief of Ḍerey'eeyah, and when he died after

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fifty years of sway the promise made him by Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb had been accomplished to the full. Sa'ood left to his sons the undisputed sovereignty of Inner Arabia, and a name respected and even dreaded throughout the entire Peninsula.

Here let us leave awhile the history of the Sa'ood dynasty, and return to the mainspring and organizer of these strange events, Moḥammed the Wahhabee. This great man, for he merits the name, passed his latter years at Ḍerey'eeyah, and cooperated by word and writing with the sword of Sa'ood. He composed many treatises, some of which I have read; their invariable theme is the explanation and confirmation of the doctrines characteristic of his sect, treatises which a Supralapsarian might peruse with edification, and an Antinomian almost mistake for the Acts of the Synod of Dort. However—and in this he proved the sincerity of a zeal not perhaps according to knowledge, but at any rate no pretence—he never took on himself any political authority, or arrogated the right of interfering, directly at least, with affairs of state; content with the office of master in Israel, and with the respect of all around him to his latest day, he died before his patron at Ḍerey'eeyah, and was there buried, leaving several sons, whose names I have heard variously reported. His grandson, 'Abd-er-Raḥmān, is still alive, though in decrepit old age, at Riaḍ, where I have more than once seen and conversed with him. 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, son of 'Abd-er-Raḥmān, and great-grandson of the founder of the sect, is at present Ḳadee in the capital; he is a middle-aged man of about forty, and happy in a numerous family, of whom, and of 'Abd-el-Laṭeef himself, more anon. I was told, but on slight authority, that 'Abd-Allah, father of 'Abd-er-Raḥmān and son of Moḥammed the Wahhabee, was put to death in the great massacre of the Nejdean doctors, by order of Ibraheem Basha, in 1818.

The whole family has constantly held the highest judicial and religious posts in the Wahhabee empire, and has amassed considerable wealth, let us hope by none but honest means. Its members, who have not thought fit to imitate in this respect the modesty of their great ancestor, exercise a predominant influence in the state, and, though never decorated with the official

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titles belonging to purely civil or military authority, do yet, in reality, rule the rulers of the land, and their own masters of the Sa'ood dynasty never venture to contradict them, even on matters of policy or war. But we must soon touch afresh on these topics, and it is now time to leave them awhile, and return to our diary, interrupted by the memory of Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb in his native town of Ḥoreymelah.

Our evening party lasted on far into the starry night; the Persian Nā'ib and his satellites retired to rest, while Aboo-'Eysa and ourselves remained to listen to the fire-eating discourses of Beṭāḥ, and lead him on from tale to tale. Like most Nejdeans, he added innate eloquence of diction to grammatical purity of language; and Barakāt was here, as often elsewhere during our journey, compelled to admit that neither at Zaḥleh nor at Damascus is the spoken dialect, even amongst the best educated and the most pretentious, worthy the name of Arabic if compared to the diction of Nejed.

Next morning we resumed our route, accompanied by Beṭāḥ's men, who were charged to escort us to the frontiers of the province. These were not distant, and long before noon we entered on a white and marly plain, an expansion of the gorge up which we had come, and saw before us the little town of Sedoos, the northern limit of 'Aared, and scene of several skirmishes during the Egyptian war. We here left the lower grounds, with their broad but circuitous route, to follow a straight cut across the mountain, whose ledge we climbed (so steep that the camels had much ado to master it), and reached a table-land of considerable elevation, yet well provided with grass and trees. The horizon was still bounded on the east by Ṭoweyḳ itself; south and west it was comparatively open. Our day's march was long, and we pushed on briskly and silently, till in the late afternoon we halted under a pretty grove, lighted our fires, and partook of what food ordinary Arab travellers have leisure or means to prepare. When we moved off once more evening was at hand, but before sunset we attained the extreme southerly verge of the heights, and skirted them for half an hour on a narrow path, having the depths of Wadi Ḥaneefah immediately below. Then came a long and difficult descent into the valley, where, at the precipice foot,

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an overhanging rock sheltered a large deep pool of clear water, of which we all gladly drank, for the day had been hot, and since leaving Sedoos we had not met with either well or fountain.

Now we threaded the valley in a south-westerly direction. The first shades of nightfall were closing in, when we found ourselves among the vestiges of 'Eyānah. For half a league or more the ground was intersected by broken walls, and heaps once towers and palaces, amid headless palm-trees, ranges of ithel marking where gardens had been, dry wells, and cisterns choked with dust. Not a living soul appeared as we wound through lines of rubbish that indicated where streets had been, and passed the lone market-gate, yet standing, and open on emptiness. I did not wonder that the Arabs attributed such strange and utter ruin to a widow's curse; it must have been a bitter one. Certainly the remains of Nineveh and Ctesiphon scarcely seemed to me more marked by the Nemesis of tyranny and crime than the ruins of 'Eyānah. It is a curious fact that Ibraheem Basha, struck by the advantageous position of the town, and perhaps not unwilling to establish a permanent counterpoise to the influence of Ḍerey'eeyah by the revival of old animosities, endeavoured in his day to rebuild and repeople this locality, cleared out the old wells and sunk new ones, brought artisans and mechanicians to the work; but all in vain, the curse was too strong even for him, and he was obliged to abandon the now waterless and hopeless site to abiding desolation.

Wadi Ḥaneefah is hereabouts a good league in breadth, and full of trees and brushwood, while its precipitous sides are caverned out into countless recesses for the wolf and hyæna; deer abound also, and we saw the latter, besides hearing the growl of the ruder animals. To avoid the windings of the main valley, we left it shortly after getting clear of 'Eyānah, and proceeded on a small cross-branch leading due south, not without some danger of losing our way in the darkness, till ultimately the whole caravan, Persians, Arabs, and the one European also, fairly tired out with floundering amid sands, rocks, thorns, and ithel, insisted on a halt. Aboo-'Eysa, the most indefatigable of guides, and scarcely inclined to make allowance in others for a weariness which he never appeared himself to feel, was

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compelled, though after much expostulation, to consent to our just request. We lighted fires, a practical hint to all our neighbours of claw and tooth not to approach too near, and lay down to sleep.

The relentless Aboo-'Eysa availed himself of a simulated mistake between the rising moon and the dawn of morning to rouse us from rest two or three hours before day. Once up, we consented to continue our march, and soon regained the Wadi Ḥaneefah close by the little village of Rowḍah. Here in the first century of Islam was laid the scene of the great battle between Khālid-ebn-Waleed, the "Sword of the Faith," and Moseylemah the false prophet of Nejed, and here the death of the latter ensured the triumph of Mahometanism throughout Arabia.

The history of Moseylemah is well known. Born about the same time as Mahomet, he assumed in Nejed the prophetic title already claimed by his contemporary in Ḥejāz, and was acknowledged by his eastern countrymen for the authentic messenger of God, no less than his competitor by the inhabitants of the western coast. Moseylemah at first sought the alliance and cooperation of the Ḥejazee, but met with the scornful refusal of conscious superiority. Henceforth he employed every resource of eloquence and satire to render Mahomet and his book at once odious and ridiculous in the eyes of the Nejdeans, an attempt in which he fully succeeded. Whenever a new chapter or Soorah of the Coran appeared, Gabriel-brought from heaven, a burlesque imitation awaited it, the work of Moseylemah. I have, while in Nejed, been favoured with the recitation of many of these ludicrous pieces, yet retained by tradition; but, like most parodies, they were little worthy of memory, and often very coarse.

The doctrines of Moseylemah seem to have had what we should call a socialist tendency, and, though ultimately more favourable to civilization and advancement than those of Mahomet, may have offered less show of dignity and surface morality to their followers. They were a mitigated form of the school entitled three centuries later the Carmathian, rejected fatalism, contained a confused idea of the Incarnation, and invested their preachers and teachers with a semi-mediatorial character; but

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history or calumny ascribes to them and to their propagator the freedom of unrestrained licence, and the positive encouragement of sensuality. When men of an age far back are only known through their enemies, it is difficult to get at the truth concerning either their opinions or their persons. Thus Richard III. was perhaps in reality "a marvellous proper man," nor was Cromwell's nose so red or so bulbous as some historians have been pleased to paint it.

While matters stood thus, a third impostor appeared in South-western Arabia; but this was a woman, by name Shejāḥ; she too obtained credit among her neighbours, and drew after her a large retinue of Yemanite followers. But feeling that it was not good for the woman to be alone in the impending contest of swords no less than of creeds, she anticipated difficulties by entering into epistolary correspondence with Moseylemah; a softer feeling soon tempered the harshness of controversy, and the union of beliefs was cemented by the bond of marriage. The immediate result of this Austrian match was a considerable accession of power for Moseylemah, or "the Liar," as Mahomet had before styled him, in a nickname devoted to undesirable immortality; and hence the liar of Mecca did not think it prudent to measure arms as yet with the liars of Riaḍ and Yemen conjoined. For eight or ten years Moseylemah enjoyed the quiet possession of his Nejdean pre-eminence. But when extended conquests had disciplined the warriors of Ḥejāz, and repeated victories had raised their courage to the highest pitch, Aboo-Bekr, then caliph, gave orders to Khālid and his troops to compel Moseylemah to a decisive option between the Coran and the sword of his rival. The war, animated on either side by religious zeal and national hatred, was obstinate and bloody; but Khālid won his way step by step up Wadi Ḥaneefah till he reached Rowḍah, where Moseylemah, with his choicest troops, had taken up a last position, covering thus the immediate approaches to 'Eyānah, Ḍerey'eeyah, Riaḍ, and Yemāmah. So formidable was the Nejdean force, that Khālid himself, it is said, hesitated for a whole day and night to hazard an assault which his council of war unanimously dissuaded. But with the second morning his wonted audacity returned, and he gave his men order to advance. The battle, once engaged, lasted till

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sunset. Moseylemah fell fighting bravely sword in hand, and with him a countless multitude of the warriors of Nejed; the victors lost no less than four hundred, if fame say true, of those honoured with the title of Ṣaḥḥābah, or personal companions of the Prophet, besides a far greater number of ordinary soldiers. The body of Moseylemah was with difficulty recognized amid the heaps of slain; his head was cut off and brought to Khālid, who caused it to be set on a spear, in view of all, lest any doubt should remain among friends or enemies concerning the death of the ill-starred prophet. He next marched on Riaḍ, the birth-town of Moseylemah, and then, as now, the capital, resolved to put its inhabitants to the sword. But the citizens, no less aware of the losses their assailant had sustained than of his ferocity as conqueror, had recourse to a well-calculated stratagem, whereby to obtain more favourable conditions of surrender. Whatever swords and lances the arsenal of Riaḍ yet contained were brought out and put into the hands of women and children, of old age and infirmity; while the feeble multitude, thus equipped in martial guise, were stationed round the walls and gates of the fortified city. Khālid came up, and was greeted by a continuous glitter of steel from battlement and tower, while the rays of the morning sun flashed back from waving spears and brandished swords. Astonished at a show of resistance where he had expected only a defenceless prey, and conscious of his own diminished numbers, Khālid offered negotiations which were taken up by the Nejdeans with well affected indifference; what they had hitherto lost was, said they, but the least part of their strength, and they could well afford to lose more before giving in. To shorten the tale, they exacted guarantees for their life and liberty, for freedom and self-government, under one only condition on their part, the profession of Islam; and Khālid knew not how easy a booty he and his army had forfeited, till their plighted oath had put it beyond reach. However, the sect as such had received a mortal blow; Islam was now the official religion of the land, and the few constant adherents of the fallen cause emigrated of their own accord to Ḥaṣa and Baṣrah, where, in common with other malcontents, they laid the foundations of the Carmathian faction. The name of Moseylemah was devoted to

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opprobrium, and his native valley took the more seemly title of Wadi Ḥaneefah, or "valley of orthodoxy." Yet national sympathy often tempers, even among Wahhabees, the bitterness of sectarian hatred, and the hapless leader of Nejed is not unfrequently mentioned by his fellow-countrymen with a certain tenderness amounting almost to regret. "Mahomet and Moseylemah were both prophets," said one day in my hearing an orthodox denizen of Riaḍ; "but the former had a more propitious star."

My fair readers will perhaps be anxious to know the fate of the prophetess Sḥejāh, once spouse of Moseylemah, and now his disconsolate widow. I am happy to find, from authentic records, that the lady, like many others, proved that if she knew how to get into a scrape, she knew also how to get out of it, better than most awkward men would do. In fine, she dried her tears, execrated the memory of her former prophet and lord, became a devout Musselman, or Musselwoman, after Beppo orthography, and married a better mate; thus atoning for a heretical by an orthodox alliance: the prudent reverse of him who "loved not wisely but too well," and no less entitled to the admiration and imitation of her sex than Othello of his.

With such tales Aboo-'Eysa and the Nejdeans our companions entertained us while in the early grey of morning we passed close under the plantations of Rowḍah down the valley, now dry and still, once overflowed with the best blood of Arabia, and through the narrow and high-walled pass which gives entrance to the great strongholds of the land. The sun rose and lighted up to our view wild precipices on either side, with a tangled mass of broken rock and brushwood below, while coveys of partridges started up at our feet, and deer scampered away by the gorges to right and left, or a cloud of dust announced the approach of peasant bands or horsemen going to and fro, and gardens or hamlets gleamed through side-openings or stood niched in the bulging passes of the Wadi itself, till before noon we arrived at the little hamlet of Malḳa, or "the junction."

Its name is derived from its position. Here the valley divides in form of a Y, sending off two branches—one southerly to Ḍerey'eeyah, the other south-east-by-east through the centre of the province, and communicating with the actual capital,

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Riaḍ. At the point of bipartition stands what would in India be called a bungalow, and in Syria a khān—namely, a sort of open house for the accommodation and rest of travellers; close by is a large well, and a garden, the property of the heir-apparent 'Abd-Allah. The broad foliage of fig-trees and citrons overhangs the road, and invites to repose. We rested the hours of noon, partly in the guest-house and partly in the garden, while the Nā'ib availed himself of the seasonable leisure to dye with fresh ḥenna his beard and moustache, whose whitening undergrowth threatened to belie the artificial youth of their tips. He flattered himself with the prospect of a speedy audience from the Wahhabee monarch, and was fain to muster all the advantages of personal appearance by way of a supplement to diplomatic importance. Delusive hopes! vain endeavours! but meanwhile let him blacken his grey hairs and give sixty the semblance of thirty-five; it certainly improves his looks.

Aboo-'Eysa had meditated bringing us on that very evening to Riaḍ. But eight good leagues remained from Malḳa to the capital; and when the Nā'ib had terminated his cosmetic operations, the easterly-turning shadows left us no hope of attaining Riaḍ before nightfall. However, we resumed our march, and took the arm of the valley leading to Ḍerey'eeyah; but before reaching it we once more quitted the Wadi, and followed a shorter path by the highlands to the left. Our way was next crossed by a long range of towers, built by Ibraheem Basha as outposts for the defence of this important position. Within their line stood the lonely walls of a large square barrack; the towers were what we sometimes call Martello—short, large, and round. The level rays of the setting sun now streamed across the plain, and we came on the ruins of Ḍerey'eeyah, filling up the whole breadth of the valley beneath. The palace walls, of unbaked brick, like the rest, rose close under the left or northern edge, but unroofed and tenantless; a little lower down a wide extent of fragments showed where the immense mosque had been, and hard by, the market-place; a tower on an isolated height was, I suppose, the original dwelling-place of the Sa'ood family while yet mere local chieftains, before growing greatness transferred them to their imperial palace. The outer fortifications remained almost uninjured for much of

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their extent, with turrets and bastions reddening in the western light; in other places the Egyptian artillery or the process of years had levelled them with the earth; within the town many houses were yet standing, but uninhabited; and the lines of the streets from gate to gate were distinct as in a ground-plan. From the great size of the town (for it is full half a mile in length, and not much less in breadth), and from the close packing of the houses, I should estimate its capacity at above forty thousand indwellers. The gardens lie without, and still "living waved where man had ceased to live," in full beauty and luxuriance, a deep green ring around the grey ruins. For although the Nejdeans, holding it for an ill omen to rebuild and reinhabit a town so fatally overthrown, have transplanted the seat of government, and with it the bulk of city population, to Riaḍ, they have not deemed it equally necessary to abandon the rich plantations and well-watered fields belonging to the old capital; and thus a small colony of gardeners, in scattered huts and village dwellings close under the walls, protract the blighted existence of Ḍerey'eeyah.

While from our commanding elevation we gazed thoughtfully on this scene, so full of remembrances, the sun set, and darkness grew on. We naturally proposed a halt; but Aboo-'Eysa turned a deaf ear, and affirmed that a garden belonging to 'Abd-er-Raḥmān, already mentioned as grandson of the first Wahhabee, was but a little farther before us, and better adapted to our night's rest than the ruins. In truth, three hours of brisk travelling yet intervened between Ḍerey'eeyah and the place in question; but our guide was unwilling to enter Ḍerey'eeyah in company of Persians and Syrians, Shiya'ees and Christians; and this he afterwards confessed to me. For whether from one of those curious local influences which outlast even the change of races, and give one abiding colour to the successive tenants of the same spot, or whether it be occasioned by the constant view of their fallen greatness and the triumph of their enemies, the scanty population of Ḍerey'eeyah comprises some of the bitterest and most bigoted fanatics that even 'Aareḍ can offer. My readers will here recall to mind the fate of my unlucky precursor in Nejdean exploration, and the events which stained these very sands with his blood. Accordingly we moved on, still keeping

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to the heights, and late at night descended a little hollow, where amid an extensive garden stood the country villa of 'Abd-er-Raḥmān.

We did not attempt to enter the house; indeed, at such an hour no one was stirring to receive us. But a shed in the garden close by sufficed for travellers who were all too weary to desire aught but sleep; and this we soon found in spite of dogs and jackals, numerous here and throughout Nejed.

From this locality to the capital was about four miles' distance. Our party divided next morning: the Nā'ib and his associates remaining behind, while Barakāt and myself, with Aboo-'Eysa, set off straight for the town, where our guide was to give notice at the palace of the approach of the Persian dignitary, that the honours due to his reception might meet him half way. At our request the Meccans stayed also in the rear; we did not desire the equivocal effect of their company on a first appearance.

For about an hour we proceeded southward, through barren and undulating ground, unable to see over the country to any distance. At last we attained a rising eminence, and crossing it, came at once in full view of Riaḍ, the main object of our long journey—the capital of Nejed and half Arabia, its very heart of hearts.

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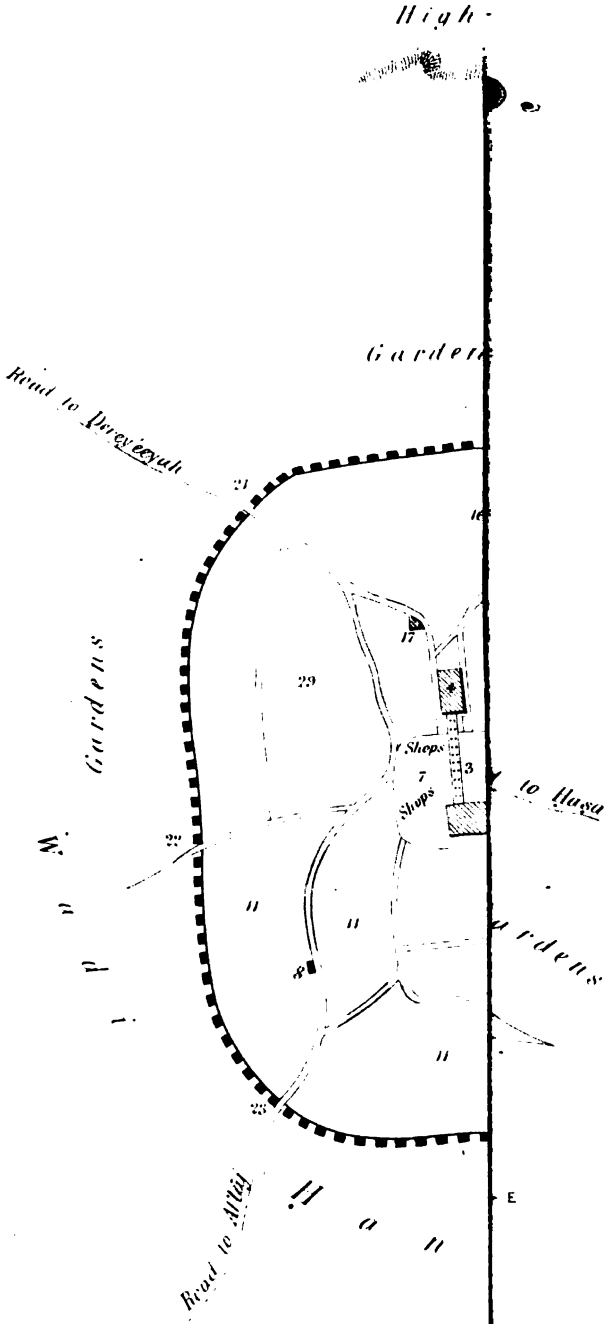

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CHAPTER IX

RIAḌ

As when a scout
Through dark and secret ways with peril gone
All night, at last by break of cheerful dawn
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers unawares
The goodly prospect of some foreign land
First seen, or some renowned metropolis.—*Milton*

A VIEW OF RIAḌ AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD—A MEETING—CEMETERY—ENTRANCE OF THE TOWN—MARKET-PLACE—HALT AT THE PALACE—'ABD-EL-'AZEEZ, HIS OFFICE AND CHARACTER—INTERIOR OF THE PALACE—ITS ARCHITECTURE, SIZE, AND ARRANGEMENTS—THE ḴHĀWAH—DINNER—THE RECEPTION OF THE NĀ'IB—HIS DISGUST—OUR LODGINGS IN THE PALACE OF DJELOO'WEE—EFFECT OF OUR ARRIVAL ON FEYṢUL—HIS RETREAT OUT OF TOWN—RIAḌ SPIES—'ABD-EL-ḤAMEED THE PESHAWUREE—HIS HISTORY, CHARACTER, AND CONVERSATION—'ABBOOD THE MEDDEY'YEB—CHOLERA IN NEJED—INSTITUTION OF THE "ZELATORS"—THEIR SYSTEM—POWER—ITS RESULTS AT RIAḌ, IN NEJED, AND IN THE PROVINCES—PRESENT POSITION OF THE ZELATORS—REACTION—'ABBOOD AND HIS CONVERSATION—OFFER MADE BY 'ABD-EL-'AZEEZ—OUR REFUSAL—INTERVIEW OF ABOO-'EYSA WITH FEYṢUL—OUR DIFFICULTIES—BRIBING THE GOVERNMENT—CONFIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH ABOO-'EYSA—OUR NEW DWELLING NEAR THE NĀ'IB—COFFEE—ITS QUALITIES AND TRADE—WINE—REASON OF ITS PROHIBITION BY MAHOMET—WINE IN CHRISTIANITY AND IN MAHOMETANISM—ANALOGOUS PROHIBITIONS IN ISLAM—ITS ULTIMATE TENDENCY—POSITION OF ISLAM RELATIVE TO OTHER RELIGIONS—CHARACTER OF ITS PRAYERS AND INSTITUTIONS—CONCENTRATION OF MAHOMET'S SCHEMES—PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES—EXCEPTIONS AND REACTION—OUR LIFE AT RIAḌ—A VISIT TO THE MARKET-PLACE—MIXED POPULATIONS—SKETCHES—FOUR DIVISIONS OF THE TOWN—GREAT SQUARE AND DJĀMIA'—PECULIARITIES OF WAHHABEE WORSHIP—ANECDOTE OF A DAMASCENE SHEYKH AT RIAḌ—THE KHOṬBAH—OTHER WAHHABEE DIFFERENCES—WALLS OF THE TOWN—GARDENS—CLIMATE—SHEEP, CATTLE, GAME—THE NEGRO POPULATION, WHY NUMEROUS HERE—AFFINITY BETWEEN THE AFRICANS AND SOUTHERN ARABS—ISMAEL AND ḴAḤṬĀN—NEGRO EMANCIPATION—THE KHOḌEYRREYAH—THEIR SOCIAL

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POSITION — POPULATION OF NEJED — BENOO-REMEEM — THEIR PECULIAR CHARACTER — DECLINE OF COMMERCE — AGRICULTURE — WARLIKE IMPULSE — REFLECTIONS — LANGUAGE OF NEJED — THE TWO GREAT ARAB DIALECTS — THEIR ORIGIN AND DIFFERENCE — REMARKS.

BEFORE us stretched a wild open valley, and in its foreground, immediately below the pebbly slope on whose summit we stood, lay the capital, large and square, crowned by high towers and strong walls of defence, a mass of roofs and terraces, where overtopping all frowned the huge but irregular pile of Feyṣul's royal castle, and hard by it rose the scarce less conspicuous palace, built and inhabited by his eldest son, 'Abd-Allah. Other edifices too of remarkable appearance broke here and there through the maze of grey roof-tops, but their object and indwellers were yet to learn. All around for full three miles over the surrounding plain, but more especially to the west and south, waved a sea of palm-trees above green fields and well-watered gardens; while the singing droning sound of the water-wheels reached us even where we had halted, at a quarter of a mile or more from the nearest town-walls. On the opposite side southwards, the valley opened out into the great and even more fertile plains of Yemāmah, thickly dotted with groves and villages, among which the large town of Manfooḥah, hardly inferior in size to Riaḍ itself, might be clearly distinguished. Farther in the background ranged the blue hills, the ragged sierra of Yemāmah, compared some thirteen hundred years since, by 'Amroo-ebn-Kelthoom the Shomerite, to drawn swords in battle array; and behind them was concealed the immeasurable Desert of the South, or Dahnā. On the west the valley closes in and narrows in its upward windings towards Ḍerey'eeyah, while to the south-west the low mounds of Aflāj are the division between it and Wadi Dowāsir. But eastward it communicates through undulating and broken ground with the long valley of Soley' or Wadi Soley', whose northerly branch runs far up behind the inner chain of Ṭoweyḳ under the mountain of 'Aṭālah, while its southerly extremity traverses a broad extent of sands, thinly sprinkled with an occasional grove or village, and, passing through them, ends at the town of Ḥooṭah, long the rival and now the discontented vassal of Riaḍ. Here the province of Ḥareeḳ borders the desert, and encroaches on it northward and eastward, till it

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almost gives a hand to the outskirts of Ḳaṭar and the limits of 'Omanite rule. Due east in the distance a long blue line marks the farthest heights of Ṭoweyḳ, and shuts out from view the low ground of Ḥaṣa and the shores of the Persian Gulf. In all the countries which I have visited, and they are many, seldom has it been mine to survey a landscape equal to this in beauty and in historical meaning, rich and full alike to eye and mind. But should any of my readers have ever approached Damascus from the side of the Anti-Lebanon, and surveyed the Ghooṭah from the heights above Mazzeh, they may thence form an approximate idea of the valley of Riaḍ when viewed from the north. Only this is wider and more varied, and the circle of vision here embraces vaster plains and bolder mountains; while the mixture of tropical aridity and luxuriant verdure, of crowded population and desert tracks, is one that Arabia alone can present, and in comparison with which Syria seems tame, and Italy monotonous.

A light morning mist, the first we had witnessed for many days, hung over the town, and bespoke the copious moisture of its gardens. But the hot sun soon dissipated the thin and transient veil; whilst the sensible increase of heat indicated a region not only more southerly in latitude than that hitherto traversed, but also exposed to the burning winds of the neighbouring desert, that lies beyond the inner verge of Yemāmah, like one vast furnace, up to the very shores of the Indian Ocean.

Barakāt and myself stopped our dromedaries a few minutes on the height, to study and enjoy this noble prospect, and to forget the anxiety inseparable from a first approach to the lion's own den. Aboo-'Eysa too, though not unacquainted with the scene, willingly paused with us to point out and name the main features of the view, and show us where lay the onward road to his home in Ḥaṣa. We then descended the slope and skirted the walls of the first outlying plantations which gird the town. Here more than one whom we met saluted our guide in the friendly tone of an old acquaintance; but above all, a lad whom Aboo-'Eysa had picked up some years before; a destitute orphan of this vicinity, whose education and means of livelihood he had, with a generosity less remarkable in Arabia than it might be elsewhere, provided for, till the youth was

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able to work out for himself his own way in the world. He now happened to be filling a water-skin from a well near the roadside at the moment of our arrival. The boy ran up to kiss Aboo-'Eysa's hand, and to prove, by the evident sincerity of his delight at seeing him again, that gratitude is no less an Arab than a European virtue, whatever the ignorance or the prejudices of some foreigners may have affirmed to the contrary. With a little knot of companions walking by our side, and laughing and talking their fill, we entered on a byway leading between the royal stables on one hand, and a spacious garden belonging to 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, Ḳaḍee of the town, on the other. After a while we came out on the great cemetery, which spreads along the north-eastern wall, and contains the population of many past years—low tombs, without stone or memorial, inscription or date. Among these lies Turkee, father of the present monarch, and close beside him his slaughtered rivals, Meshāree and Ebn-Theney'yān, with many others of note in their day, now undistinguished from the meanest and poorest of their fellow-countrymen.

This burial-ground is intersected by several tracks, leading to the different town-gates; we ourselves now followed a path ending at the north-eastern portal, a wide and high entrance, with thick square towers on either side; several guardsmen armed with swords were seated in the passage. Aboo-'Eysa answered their challenge, and led us within the town. Here we found ourselves at first in a broad street, going straight to the palace; on each side were large houses, generally two storeys high, wells for ablution, mosques of various dimensions, and a few fruit-trees planted here and there in the courtyards. After advancing two hundred yards or rather more, we had on our right hand the palace of 'Abd-Allah, a recent and almost symmetrical construction, square in form, with goodly carved gates, and three storeys of windows one above the other. We contemplated and were contemplated by groups of negroes and servants, seated near the doors, or on the benches outside, in the cool of the morning shade. A little farther on, to the left, we passed the palace of Djeloo'wee, brother of Feyṣul, and at this time absent on business in the direction of Ḳela'at-Bisha'. At last we reached a great open square: its right side, the northern, consists of shops and warehouses; while the left is

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entirely absorbed by the huge abode of Nejdean royalty; in front of us, and consequently to the west, a long covered passage, upborne high on a clumsy colonnade, crossed the breadth of the square, and reached from the palace to the great mosque, which it thus joins directly with the interior of the castle, and affords old Feyṣul a private and unseen passage at will from his own apartments to his official post at the Friday prayers, without exposing him on his way to vulgar curiosity, or perhaps to the dangers of treachery. For the fate of his father and of his great-uncle, his predecessors on the throne, and each of them pierced by the dagger of an assassin during public worship, has rendered Feyṣul very timid on this score, though not at prayer-time only. Behind this colonnade, other shops and warehouses make up the end of the square, or more properly parallelogram; its total length is about two hundred paces, by rather more than half the same width. In the midst of this space, and under the far-reaching shadow of the castle walls, are seated some fifty or sixty women, each with a stock of bread, dates, milk, vegetables, or firewood before her for sale; around are crowds of loiterers, camels, dromedaries, sacks piled up, and all the wonted accompaniments of an Arab market.

But we did not now stop to gaze, nor indeed did we pay much attention to all this; our first introduction to the monarch and the critical position before us took up all our thoughts. So we paced on alongside of the long blind wall running out from the central keep, and looking more like the outside of a fortress than of a peaceful residence, till we came near a low and narrow gate, the only entry to the palace. Deep sunk between the bastions, with massive folding-doors iron-bound, though thrown open at this hour of the day, and giving entrance into a dark passage, one might easily have taken it for the vestibule of a prison; while the number of guards, some black, some white, but all sword-girt, who almost choked the way, did not seem very inviting to those without, especially to foreigners. Long earth-seats lined the adjoining walls, and afforded a convenient waiting-place for visitors; and here we took up our rest at a little distance from the palace gate; but Aboo-'Eysa entered at once to announce our arrival, and the approach of the Nā'ib.

The morning was not far advanced, it might be eight o'clock

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or little later. The passers-by were many, for the adjoining market was open, and every one coming and going on his daily business. However no one approached to question us, though several stared; we were somewhat surprised at this unwonted absence of familiarity, not yet fully knowing its cause. After a good half-hour's waiting the ice was broken.

The first who drew near and saluted us was a tall meagre figure, of a sallow complexion, and an intelligent but slightly ill-natured and underhand cast of features. He was very well dressed, though of course without a vestige of unlawful silk in his apparel, and a certain air of conscious importance tempered the affability of his politeness. This was 'Abd-el-'Azeez, whom, for want of a better title, and without the smallest allusion to Downing Street, I shall call the minister of foreign affairs, such being the approximate translation of his official style, "'Wezeer-el-Ḳhārijeeyah." His office extends to whatever does not immediately regard the internal administration, whether political, fiscal, or military. Thus it is his to regulate the reception of ambassadors from foreign courts, or the expedition of such from Riaḍ itself; to his department belongs the conveyance of government letters, messages, and all the detail of lesser affairs regarding allies or neighbours, especially where the Bedouin tribes of Nejed are concerned; in his keeping are the muster-rolls of the towns and provinces; and lastly, he exercises an executive superintendence over export and import duties—a profitable charge, particularly when in the hands of one not over-famed for strictness of conscience or contempt of gain. His personal qualities are those which distinguish the majority of old Riaḍ families, and are indeed common enough throughout 'Aareḍ. A reserved and equable exterior, a smooth tongue, a courteous though grave manner, and beneath this, hatred, envy, rapacity, and licentiousness enough to make his intimacy dangerous, his enmity mortal, and his friendship suspected. This is the peculiar stamp of the 'Aareḍ race, the pith and heart of the Wahhabee government; we have already seen a sample of it in Mohanna at Bereydah; but here it is a province of Mohannas. "Hateful and hating each other," were words constantly recurring to my mind while amongst them; and Saul or Doeg, Joab or Achitophel, may furnish their correct

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type to my readers. However, the base-work and ground-colour of their character is envy and hatred; rapacity and licentiousness, though seldom wholly wanting, are accessory embellishments; pride is universal, vanity rare. Add to this, great courage, endurance, persistence of purpose, an inflexible will united to a most flexible cunning, passions that can bide their time, and audacity long postponed till the moment to strike once, and once only; and it will be easily understood why the empire of these men is alike widely spread and widely hated, submitted to and loathed, now firm in quiet pressure, and now varied by broad blood-streaks and desolating terror.

But before I enter on the details of the fifty days that followed in this strange town, and whatever remains to relate regarding it, I must draw somewhat largely on the stock of confidence and belief which I trust that my readers kindly afford me as an Englishman, though a traveller. I am quite aware that the events, the characters, the scenes which I must now set before them are in their telling subject to a double inconvenience; the first that of appearing, to some at least, hardly credible, the second that of making myself much more often than is desirable the hero of my own tale. But either inconvenience, however great, must of necessity yield to the truth of facts; so it looked, and so it happened; I can only relate, and leave comments to others. My object is to give as correct, indeed as complete an idea as may be of a land, a government, a town, a people, not uninteresting nor uninstructive when considered whether in themselves or in the analogies they present with other nations, systems, or governments. Such analogies, most often suggested by themselves beside or against my will, cannot fail to present themselves to the minds of my readers; nor, if example be of any use, is it amiss that they should; our best glass for seeing our own selves is our neighbour's face. May I be permitted to hope that, whoever may perchance consider his natural face in this Eastern mirror, will not at once, like one of old, go his way, and forget what manner of man he was, or is? These remarks will, I trust, suffice as preface and apology, where needed, for what follows.

Accompanied by some attendants from the palace, 'Abd-el-'Azeez came stately up, and seated himself by our side. He

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next began the customary interrogations of whence and what, with much smiling courtesy and show of welcome. After hearing our replies, the same of course as those given elsewhere, he invited us to enter the precincts, and partake of his Majesty's coffee and hospitality, while he promised us more immediate communications from the king himself in the course of the day. Accordingly we followed him within the gate, and passing its long and obscure continuation came into a sort of interior lane, or open corridor. On one side were the apartments occupied by the sovereign, his private audience-room, his oratory, so to call it, or special Muṣalla, "place of prayer," and behind these the chambers of his numerous harem, and of his unmarried daughter, an old maid of fifty at least, who acts as her father's secretary in important correspondence, and with whom, for this very reason, Feyṣul has never been willing to part, in spite of her numerous and pressing suitors. This quarter of the palace is spacious and lofty, three storeys in height, and between fifty and sixty feet from the ground to the roof-parapet. In these very rooms was Meshāree killed by 'Abd-Allah, the father of our old acquaintance Ṭelāl. In front of this mass of building, but on the inner side and on the right of the passage just mentioned, is a square unroofed court, surrounded with seats, and here Feyṣul sometimes gives a half-public audience. From this court a private door, well guarded and narrow like the first, leads to the apartments described, which form, so to speak, a separate palace within the palace. They own, however, a second point of communication with the rest of the building, by means of a covered way, thrown out from the second storey across the passage where we now stood; a third is given by the long gallery that leads above its columns to the mosque at about a hundred yards' distance; on all other sides whatever intercourse from without is carefully excluded. I ought here to add that all the windows are strongly cross-barred, and the doors solid and provided with stout locks and bolts, while on the outside a glacis encircles the lower part of the walls, and adds to their thickness, besides giving them the appearance of regular fortification. Lastly, the ground-storey has no windows, large or small, opening on the exterior.

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On the other side of the passage the first door we meet with is that of the Ḳ'hāwah. To this apartment entrance is given by a vestibule wherein visitors deposit their shoes or swords, or both if they have both; the Ḳ'hāwah itself is sufficiently large, about forty feet in length and of nearly equal width, but low and ill-lighted. Farther on is another door, conducting to the prison. I visited two of its chambers or cells; they would hardly have attracted the censure even of a Howard—large, airy, and provided with whatever might be requisite for the comfort of their indwellers. The Ḥabs-ed-Dem, literally "Prison of Blood," that is, that for state criminals of the first order, is underneath, below ground, and probably affords worse lodgings; but I did not think it prudent to ask admittance. Just beyond this prison, and opposite to the courtyard on the other side already mentioned, a long flight of stairs leads up through the open air to the second storey; here is a guest's dining-room, capable of admitting forty at a time, and pleasantly cool. Immediately behind it is said to exist in the very thickness of the wall a small closet, communicating with the secret passage to the harem; and in this unworthy niche popular scandal ensconces Feyṣul, who may thus himself unseen overhear through the thin partition whatever escapes his unsuspecting guests in a moment of convivial freedom, and record it for his own ends. A Hamlet's rapier were the best thing for such rats behind the arras, the more so since here "Is it the king?" might be answered in the affirmative. Beyond are rooms inhabited by servants and attendants.

Farther on the passage enters the main body of the palace, passing under the second storey, and at once branches off on either side. Right hand it leads to the great kitchen, next to the indoors Muṣalla, or oratory for the inhabitants of the palace, Feyṣul and his harem alone excepted; and beyond terminates in a second and spacious courtyard, on one side of which is the arsenal and powder-magazine, and on the other workshops of various descriptions, a watchmaker's among the rest, all for the king's immediate service. Hard by the kitchen are the rooms of 'Abd-el-Ḥameed, native of Balkh, a dubious character, supposed to be deeply engaged in religious study, and really busied in very different pursuits; but of him

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more anon. On this same side inhabits our friend 'Abd-el-'Azeez, the foreign minister; but I never entered his saloon, contenting myself with identifying the door and locality for information's sake.

The left branch passage leads to the large and handsome apartments tenanted by Maḥboob, prime minister of the empire. Exactly opposite lives the Meṭow'waa', or chaplain of the palace, and next door to him another learned Nejdean, both plunged in studies on antecedent reprobation, and the polytheism of all sects, their own excepted. Farther on are the extensive quarters of Djowhar, the state-treasurer (his name, which being interpreted means "Jewel," is at least appropriate), and opposite to these is a long suite of rooms where lives one Naṣir, a sort of court chamberlain, but which are also at the disposal of Sa'ood, second son of Feyṣul, when he visits his father at Riad. Last, but not least, Aboo-Shems, head artilleryman of the army, inhabits this same section of the palace. Besides these notables, a crowd of full sixty or seventy attendants, mostly negroes, are lodged within the precincts; while all and each, from the highest to the lowest, have their separate apartments for the numerous wives with which orthodoxy blesses them; and, again, every single household is entirely distinct from the rest: hence my readers may imagine how vast and how ill-assorted this mass of building must be. Lastly, there exists on the left a long courtyard or area, corresponding to that already mentioned on the right; and here too is situated the Bab-es-Sirr, or secret gate, constructed to serve in the eventualities of a siege, of treason, or other desperate emergencies. The entire hive of habitations is surrounded by high walls and hollow round towers for defence; two-thirds of the circuit have the additional safeguard of a deep trench, but without water.

If my readers have seen, as most of them undoubtedly will, the Paris Tuileries, they may hereby know that the whole extent of Feyṣul's palace equals about two-thirds of that construction, and is little inferior to it in height; if indeed we except the angular pyramidal roofs or extinguishers peculiar to the French edifice. But in ornament the Parisian pile has the better of it, for there is small pretension to architectural embellishment in this Wahhabee Louvre. Without, within, every

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other consideration has been sacrificed to strength and security; and the outer view of Newgate bears a very strong resemblance to the general effect of Feyṣul's palace, though I know not how far the interior of the London felon-cage may be like that of the Nejdean den of thieves. However, this latter is at any rate well furnished and fitted up, especially in the sections allotted to the royal family themselves, to Maḥboob and to Djowhar; the upstairs rooms too are fairly lighted; not so the ground-storey, which would be all the better for gas, could it but be introduced here.

I should have said that the quarter set apart for royalty, that is, Feyṣul and his many queens, is itself a quadrangle with an inner court, but into this I was never permitted to enter; these are family apartments on which no prying eye may look. The divan for special receptions, the only room hereabouts into which a stranger can be introduced, is large and comfortable, being about fifty feet long, twenty or more in breadth, and high in proportion.

In the first court, and in that on the left where resides the valorous Aboo-Shems, several rusty specimens of artillery strike awe into Arab souls. I counted above twenty field-pieces, half a dozen of them still available for service; there were, I was told, others, which I did not see. At Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef there exist about thirty more; so that Feyṣul's battery-list may sum up sixty or so of these warlike engines; a fourth of them in all, according to my personal inspection, are fit for use; and the rest "as good, for aught his kingship knows," but they are "honeycombed."

Such is the palace, as I afterwards came to know it in detail, and such its contents. For the present we stopped short at our visit to the Ḳ'hāwah. The head coffee-maker was a good-natured fellow, and, strange to say, not a negro, nor even a man of 'Aareḍ, but from the Ḥareeḳ; several guests were seated around, and conversation followed, but every one was manifestly under restraint. The fact is, that in this town, and yet more of course in the palace, no one ambitious of sleeping in a whole skin can give his tongue free play; and all have in consequence the manner of boys when the school-master is at home. However, the coffee was excellent; in that

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point Riaḍ and its Ḳ'hāwahs are unrivalled, and we remained awhile in aromatic enjoyment, awaiting further orders from 'Abd-el-'Azeez, or some other of the court.

But the coincident arrival of the Nā'ib and his train was too serious a preoccupation to admit of much thought being yet given to us; and when noon came we were still sitting almost disregarded in the Ḳ'hāwah, while our baggage and camels waited patiently in the sun outside. At last a negro slave came up, and invited us in the king's name to dinner within the guest-room upstairs, and there accordingly we ate our rice and mutton with a garnish of dates, and on rising from table were reminded by our dusky Ganymede to pray God for a long reign to Feyṣul our host.

Aboo-'Eysa meanwhile, in company with the outriders sent from the palace, had gone to meet the Nā'ib and introduce him to the lodgings prepared for his reception. Very much was the Persian astounded to find none of the royal family among those who thus came, no one even of high name or office; but yet more was his surprise when, instead of immediate admittance to Feyṣul's presence and eager embrace, he was quietly led aside to the very guest-room whither we had been conducted, and a dinner not a whit more sumptuous than ours was set before him, after which he was very coolly told that he might pray for Feyṣul and retire to his quarters, while the king settled the day and hour whereon he would vouchsafe him the honour of an audience.

I never saw any one so unutterably disgusted as our Persian on this occasion. In broken Arabic, and loud enough to be heard by half the palace, he vented his spleen against Arabs, Bedouins, Wahhabees, Nejed, town, country, and all. The men of 'Aareḍ, who heard and half understood, looked very grave, but were much too polite to say anything. Perhaps Feyṣul too was there, invisible in his recess, to overhear the conversation. Aboo-'Eysa well knew that antipathy was in this case mutual, and that if the Nā'ib thought the Wahhabees and their king mere barbarians, unworthy, in European phrase, to black his shoes, they, in their turn, looked on him as a despicable foreigner, an infidel, and a destined log for hell-fire, thus fairly equalizing the balance of reciprocal aversion.

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Hence he could not but feel the position to be very uncomfortable, and tried to console the indignant Shirazee with excuses and explanations of the "se non vero, ben trovato" kind. All this in our presence, for the Iranian band arrived just at the conclusion of our meal. I had much ado not to laugh at both parties, thinking "six of one and," &c., but tried my utmost to look grave, in consideration of the Nejdeans around, and took my cue from Aboo-'Eysa. Meanwhile we suggested to this latter, in an undertone, that for us too lodging for man and beast would be very desirable, and that if we had dined our dromedaries had not. Our guide was well acquainted with the ins and outs of the palace, and in less than no time had found out 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and arranged matters with him in our behalf. Nay, the minister of foreign affairs condescended to come in person, and, sweetly smiling, informed us that our temporary habitation was ready, and that Aboo-'Eysa would conduct us thither without delay. We then begged to know, if possible, the king's good will and pleasure regarding our stay and our business in the town. For on our first introduction we had duly stated, in the most correct Wahhabee phraseology, that we had come to Riaḍ "desiring the favour of God, and secondly of Feyṣul; and that we begged of God, and secondly of Feyṣul, permission to exercise in the town our medical profession, under the protection of God, and in the next place of Feyṣul." For Dogberry's advice to "set God first, for God defend but God should go before such villains," is here observed to the letter; whatever is desired, purported, or asked, the Deity must take the lead. Nor this only, but even the subsequent mention of the creature must nowise be coupled with that of the Creator by the ordinary conjunction "w'," that is, "and," since that would imply equality between the two—flat blasphemy in word or thought. Hence the disjunctive "thumma," or "next after," "at a distance," must take the place of "w'," under penalty of prosecution under the statute. "Unlucky the man who visits Nejed without being previously well versed in the niceties of grammar," said Barakāt; "under these schoolmasters a mistake might cost the scholar his head." But of this more anon: to return to our subject, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, a true politician, answered our second interrogation

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with a vague assurance of good will and unmeaning patronage. Meantime the Nā'ib and his train marched off in high dudgeon to their quarters, and Aboo-'Eysa gave our dromedaries a kick, made them rise, and drove them before us to our new abode.

This was in a section of Djeloo'wee's palace, now vacant, as before stated, through the absence of the prince on a half-military, half-fiscal expedition. A spacious Ḳ'hāwah, with two adjoining rooms and an upstairs chamber, had been set apart for our use. We put up the dromedaries in the courtyard, and installed ourselves in the Ḳ'hāwah.

But it is time to "shift the scene, to represent" what measures were being taken behind the stage in the palace itself on our account, and what effect this morning's incidents had produced on Feyṣul and his court. We were not long in learning the particulars, equally ludicrous and characteristic of the land and of its rulers, and well calculated to assign the full measure of their weakness, no less than other circumstances had given us that of their strength. The facts were as follow:—

When Feyṣul received intelligence of this bevy of strangers at his door, the Persian "chargé d'affaires" with all his grievances, the Meccans with their impudent mendicity, and the Syrians with their medical pretensions, he fairly lost his balance of mind, and went next to mad. Old and blind, superstitious and timid, bigoted and tyrannical, whatever construction the utmost conjecture could put on this motley band thus rushing almost unannounced into his very capital, nay, encamped at the doors of his own palace, served only to augment his alarm, suspicion, and disgust. The sacred centre of Nejdean orthodoxy profaned in one and the same moment by the threefold abomination of Persians, Meccans, and Syrians, Shiya'ees, Sonnees, and Christians, heretics, polytheists, and infidels, was surely enough to call down fire from heaven, or awake an earthquake from beneath. An invasion of cholera was the very least that could be next anticipated. There was, however, worse yet: the begging Meccans might indeed be easily got rid of, and a scanty gift would, it was to be hoped, purchase the relief of the capital from the pollution of their presence. But the Nā'ib, with Teheran and the Shah of Persia at his back, was a very different affair; and Feyṣul knew too well that

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the complaints now about to be laid before him were over-true, and that for all vexations inflicted by Aboo-Boṭeyn or Mohanna, he himself, their master, was really and ultimately responsible. Besides, it was precisely by the Persian dagger of a Persian assassin that his ancestor 'Abd-el-'Azeez-ebn-Sa'ood had fallen; and who could tell whether the Nā'ib, or at any rate one of his attendants, might not have a similar weapon ready for the Chief of the Orthodox? For the two Syrians, worse still. They must be Christians, possibly assassins, certainly magicians. The least to be apprehended from them was a spell, an evil eye, perhaps a poisonous incantation. To sum up, one and all were spies; of that at least there could be no doubt.

Whether Maḥboob, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and the court in general, seriously partook in the terrors of Feyṣul, I know not, nor much think it. However, they had the prudence to sing in their master's tune, and all pronounced the danger real and imminent. What measures then might yet avail to avert it? or how dispose of so many enemies at once? The unanimous conclusion was that, prudence being the best part of valour, his most sacred Majesty should, without delay, escape from the capital, and from the ill-omened vicinity of so many infidels and sorcerers, spies and assassins, and conceal his royal person in some secure retreat, while due measures should in his absence be taken to sound the intentions and watch the proceedings of these most suspicious strangers, and to anticipate or prevent their perfidious designs.

Accordingly, hardly had the Nā'ib retired to his appointed dwelling and we to ours, while the Meccans had been stowed away in another nook, but not far off, when Feyṣul, accompanied by Maḥboob, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and a few others, passed in great secrecy through the Bab-es-Sirr, left the castle, traversed the town as quietly as possible, and buried himself in the recesses of a secluded garden belonging to 'Abd-er-Raḥmān the Wahhabee. Guards were placed all round the orchard, and hope revived that, what between the remoteness of the spot, the blessings of the pure orthodoxy of its possessor, the thickness of the foliage, and the swords of the negroes, Feyṣul might yet elude the contaminations of polytheism and the perils of assassination, spells, and evil eyes. Meanwhile a respite was

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thus assured, and leisure gained for better detecting the mystery of iniquity, and baffling it of its aim.

No time was, however, to be lost, and the great engine of Wahhabee government, its spy system, than which no Tiberius ever organized a better, was set in play. Meanwhile the unconscious conspirators and magicians were innocently engaged in arranging their baggage, and were indulging themselves in the narcotic vapours which they had been unable hitherto from sheer politeness to enjoy; but not till after carefully closing doors and windows, lest the odour of the "shameful" should diffuse itself through the hallowed breezes of the street. Sudden a modest knock sounds at the door. Quick, pipes are laid aside; Barakāt goes to the vestibule to enquire who may be outside, and gives the tobacco-smoke time to evaporate by a minute's delay, before he opens the entrance.

In glided a figure that we were little prepared to see in Riaḍ. Clad in the dress proper to Affghanistan, with an elegant white turban, and the unmistakable features of the north-west Punjab frontiers, 'Abd-el-Ḥameed, the seeming student of the palace, stood before us. A better spy, or one more likely to throw us off our guard, could not have been hit upon. For in addition to his being a stranger like ourselves, and therefore well calculated to attract our sympathy and open our hearts, he was possessed of all that grace of manner and apparent candour which his countrymen can so skilfully assume when required, and of which some of my readers may not improbably have made experience in the East. Master in the school of dissimulation, so much so that he had even taken in the Wahhabees themselves, who believed him anything but what he really was, he might trust to succeed even with us, in spite of our spells and divining art.

This man was by his own account son of the governor of Balkh, and an orthodox Sonnee of the Ḥaneefee class. Having set out from his native land on a pilgrimage to Mecca, with riches, attendants, and what not, the very king's son of the fairy-tale, he had, so said he, suffered a disastrous shipwreck on some unknown rock in the Persian Gulf; and, harder still, pirates had robbed him of whatever the greedy deep had spared. Servantless, moneyless, companionless, he had arrived on the

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Wahhabee frontiers, where the fame of Feyṣul's generosity had attracted him to Riaḍ, in hope of receiving necessary aid wherewithal to complete his pilgrimage and return to his anxious parents. But once in that earthly paradise of piety and learning, he had opened his eyes to the pure light and unadulterated faith of the Wahhabee, and henceforth resolved to renounce home and all its pleasures, and to pass his remaining days in the study and practice of genuine Islam, amid congenial souls, far from tobacco, celestial mediators, and polytheism.

Provided by Feyṣul's liberality with a suitable equipment of books and wives, he edified palace and town by his devout prayers and composed exterior; his time was divided between the mosque and the harem, his mouth always full of the praises of God and Feyṣul, his conversation invariably of piety or women. No doubt could be entertained touching the sincerity of his conversion, and the sacrifice made by the fervent proselyte of ancestral halls and rule was everywhere extolled and appreciated. It may seem almost cruel to tarnish such pure gold, or to detract from so justly earned a reputation. But we are now far away from Riaḍ, and it will do 'Abd-el-Ḥameed no wrong if another and a truer version of his history is published in England. Native not of Balkh but of Peshawur, not a Sonnee but a Shiya'ee of the Shiya'ees, no governor's son but of very plebeian extraction and worse than plebeian morals, he had in a market squabble stabbed a man, and anticipated justice by flight. Wandering about in an exile from which prudence could not permit him for some years to return, he had fixed on Riaḍ as a convenient retreat till the storm at home should have blown over, and practised on Nejdean gullibility by assuming the disguise which now he bore. But a true Shiya'ee at heart, he never failed to couple every uttered blessing on the Caliphs, the Ṣaḥḥābah, and their living copies around him, with an inward curse on them all, and amused himself with the credulity of men whom he held in his heart for very fools and infidels. Besides, board and lodging, good clothes, and plenty of wives were excellent things, and with such solaces his period of banishment passed by agreeably enough, while waiting till circumstances should permit him a safe return to his own land.

All this we learned subsequently through the Nā'ib, who,

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himself a native of a cognate country, and in his earlier years a frequent traveller in the upper valley of the Indus, proved, diamond cutting diamond, too sharp for our Peshawuree, and entertained me with a Hindoostanee version of the whole affair. Once on this cue, I set my own wits to work, and drew out of 'Abd-el-Ḥameed (though this name, too, was a mere alias, but I have forgotten his authentic denomination) sufficient confirmation of whatever the Shirazee had told. These facts, however unimportant in themselves, are worth recounting, because illustrative of many parallel episodes in Oriental history. Not that perhaps, on the whole, imposture is much easier in the East than in the West, or in ancient than in modern times. We have our own examples too; and if Europeans and recent centuries have a superior advantage in point of critical learning and scientific investigation, Orientals, and the bygone ages that they even now represent, have often all the keener eyesight for practical search and detection, because less dulled by "poring over miserable books." However, be it that "all men are liars," as some one said it in haste; all men in common are capable of being deceived too, even Arabs and Nejdeans.

Our Peshawuree or Balkhee sat down, and after a few indifferent remarks began to consult me about some ailment of his outer man. But this not being the exact object of his visit, he soon got off the tack, and commenced cross-questioning and throwing out hints like angling-hooks, in hopes to fish up truth from the bottom of the well. Meanwhile the two Meccans had dropped in, and were in their turn submitted to the same interrogatory system, but were not detained long, since the main purport of their business, namely, begging, was soon understood. So 'Abd-el-Ḥameed returned to the charge with us; tried me with Hindoostanee, Persian, and even a few words of broken English, but all in vain, and ended by inwardly concluding that the matter was far from satisfactory. Then he rose in a rather abrupt manner, and left us to give his report to those who had sent him.

That this report was highly unfavourable I afterwards learnt. Not that he sincerely imagined our coming to have any dangerous import for the person of Feyṣul, or that we were in truth professors of the black art. But he was afraid of rivals

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in the good graces and favours of the palace, and felt like a tradesman who sees an opposition shop opening across the way; hence he prudently desired to see us as far off as possible, and to this effect spared neither suggestion nor calumny.

Not long had the Peshawuree quitted us, when another and a very different but even more dangerous agent presented himself at our door, with an air bespeaking authority, varnished over by studied meekness, and a downcast eye ever prying to observe unobserved. It was a "Meddey'yee," or "Zelator," one of the secret council and intimate organization of the Riad government.

But considering that my readers are perhaps not sufficiently acquainted with these functionaries, it will be best here to give a slight digression regarding the first origin, the character, and the progress of the "Meddey'yee" institution, and of those who compose it. This will throw more light than anything yet said on the Wahhabee organization, of which the Meddey'yees are, in fact, the mainspring and directors.

Their institution, at least in its present form, is by no means of ancient date; it belongs to the present reign, and is due to recent events. In the year 1854 or 1855, for precise accuracy of chronology in these countries is utterly hopeless, the world-wide visitation of the cholera, after travelling over the more important and thickly-peopled lands and kingdoms of the East, bethought itself of Central Arabia, hitherto, it might seem, forgotten or neglected by that scourge in the midst of more urgent occupations. Crossing the desert from the west, it fell on Nejed like a thunderbolt, and began its usual ravages, with a success totally unchecked, my readers may well imagine, by any preventive or curative measures. The upper mountain district of Sedeyr alone escaped; the lower provinces of Yemāmah, Ḥareeḳ, Woshem, and Dowāsir suffered fearfully, and the 'Aareḍ itself was one of the most severely treated. The capital, lying in a damp valley, and close-built, was depopulated; a third of its inhabitants are said to have perished within a few weeks; among the victims were some members of the royal family, and many others of aristocratic descent.

Now, so it was, that for some years previous, relaxation in religious and sectarian peculiarities had been introducing itself

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into Riaḍ; prosperity, and yet more the preceding Egyptian occupation, followed by frequent intercourse with the men and government of Cairo, an intercourse continued during the entire reign of 'Abbas Basha, nor wholly interrupted under that of Sa'eed, had combined to encourage this deplorable falling-away. Usages which, when known only through the medium of polemical treatises and controversial diatribe, excited just horror, now seemed less abominable on practical acquaintance and closer view, so contagious is bad example. The "shameful" had sent up its vapours in the Ḳ'hāwahs of the capital, and heads had been seen profaned by the iniquity of silk and gold thread. No reasonable mind could hesitate whence the origin of the cholera; the crime was notorious, the punishment mere justice. Of course the best, indeed the only, remedy for the epidemic was a speedy reform, and an efficacious return to the purity and intolerance of better days.

Feyṣul now convoked an assembly of all the principal men in the town. When met, he addressed them in a speech with which I shall not tire the patience of my readers, though my own had to bear with its rehearsal. It consisted mainly of those arbitrary and unadvised interpretations of the ways of Providence to man, unfortunately common everywhere, and justifiable nowhere. The upshot was, that they had all done wrong, very wrong; that great scandals had been given or permitted; that the fine gold had become unquestionably dim, and the silver alloyed with dross, and that their only hope lay in strict search and trial of their ways, with suitable repentance and reform. But for himself, added the monarch, he was now old and infirm, nor able unaided and alone to carry into effect measures proportioned to the gravity of the occasion. Accordingly he discharged the obligation of his own conscience on theirs, and rendered them responsible before the God of Islam for the longer duration of the cholera, or whatever else might take place, should his timely warning be neglected.

The elders of the town retired, held long consultation, and returning, proposed the following scheme, which received the kingly ratification. From among the most exemplary and zealous of the inhabitants twenty-two were to be selected, and entitled "Meddey'yeeyah," "men of zeal," or "Zelators," such being the

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nearest word in literal translation, and this I shall henceforth employ, to spare Arab cacophony. Candidates of the requisite number were soon found and mustered. On these twenty-two Feyṣul conferred absolute power for the extirpation of whatever was contrary to Wahhabee doctrine and practice, and to good morals in general, from the capital firstly, and then from the entire empire. No Roman censors in their most palmy days had a higher range of authority, or were less fettered by all ordinary restrictions. Not only were these Zelators to denounce offenders, but they might also in their own unchallenged right inflict the penalty incurred, beat and fine at discretion, nor was any certain limit assigned to the amount of the mulct, or to the number of the blows. Most comprehensive too was the list of offences brought under the animadversion of these new censors: absence from public prayers, regular attendance five times a day in the public mosques being henceforth of strict obligation; smoking tobacco, taking snuff, or chewing (this last practice, vulgarly entitled "quidding," had been introduced by the jolly tars of Koweyt and other seaports of the Persian Gulf); wearing silk or gold; talking or having a light in the house after night prayers; singing, or playing on any musical instrument; nay, even all street games of children or childish persons: these were some of the leading articles on the condemned list, and objects of virtuous correction and severity. Besides, swearing by any other name save that of God, any approach to an invocation, or even ejaculation directed to aught but Him; in short, whatever in word or deed, in conversation or in conduct, might appear to deviate from the exact orthodoxy of the letter of the Coran and the Wahhabee commentary, was to be denounced, or even punished on the spot. Lastly, their censorship extended over whatever might afford suspicion of irregular conduct; for instance, strolling about the streets after nightfall, entering too frequently a neighbour's house, especially at hours when the male denizens may be presumed absent, with any apparent breach of the laws of decorum or decency; all these were rendered offences amenable to cognizance and correctional measures. It is easy to imagine what so wide-reaching a power might become when placed in the hands of interested or vindictive administrators. However, the number of the Zelators them-

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selves, and the innate toughness and resistance of the Arab character, somewhat diminished the ill consequences which might naturally have been expected from this over-absolute and scarce-defined authority, though many and most atrocious instances of its exercise and abuse were related in my hearing.

These Zelators are bound to a very simple style of dress, devoid of ornament or pretension; they may not even wear the sword, mark of directly temporal or military authority. But in compensation, each one bears in hand a long staff, which serves the double object of official badge and instrument of chastisement, much like the truncheon of our own policeman; this, combined with downcast eyes, slow walk, subdued tone of voice, the head-dress drawn cowl-fashion low over the forehead, but without head-band, and a constant gravity of demeanour, suffices to distinguish them at first sight from the ordinary crowd. Of course, in their conversation, pious texts and ejaculations, accompanied by the forefinger upraised every half-minute at least, in season and out of season, to testify to the unity of God, are even more frequent with them than among the common faithful. Pacing from street to street, or unexpectedly entering the houses to see if there is anything incorrect going on there, they do not hesitate to inflict at once, and without any preliminary form of trial or judgment, the penalty of stripes on the detected culprit, be he who he may; and should their own staves prove insufficient, they straightway call in the assistance of bystanders or slaves, who throw the guilty individual prone on the ground, and then in concert with the Zelator belabour him at pleasure. A similar process is adopted for those whom negligence has kept from public prayer; the Zelator of the quarter, accompanied by a band of the righteous, all well armed with stout sticks, proceeds to the designated dwelling, and demands an entrance, which no one dares refuse. It is then a word and a blow, or rather many blows and few words, till the undevout shortcomer is quickened into new fervour by the most cogent of all *a posteriori* arguments. Should he happen to be absent from home at the moment of the visit, nay, sometimes even after the administration of the healing chastisement, a pledge for future good conduct, as a cloak, a sword, a head-dress, or the like, is taken from

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the house, nor restored till several days of punctual attendance at the Mesjid have repaired the scandal of past negligence, and proved the sincerity of the conversion by its perseverance. But should any rash individual attempt to resist force by force, he may be sure of the roughest treatment; and should he lift his hand against the sacred person of the Zelator, the sacrilegious member is destined to the block and the knife. However, where direct mutilation or capital punishment is due, for instance, in a case of avowed and formal heresy or infidelity, the crime is referred to the tribunal of Feyṣul himself, nor does he fail to prosecute the culprit with the utmost rigour.

Furnished with such powers, and backed up by the whole weight of government, it may be easily supposed that the new broom swept clean, and that the first institution of the Zelators was followed by root-and-branch work. Rank itself was no protection, high birth no shelter, and private or political enmities now found themselves masters of their aim. Djeloo'wee, Feyṣul's own brother, was beaten with rods at the door of the king's own palace for a whiff of tobacco-smoke; and his royal kinsman could not or would not interfere to save him from undergoing at fifty an ignominy barely endurable at fifteen. Soweylim, the prime minister, and predecessor of Maḥboob, was on a similar pretext, but in reality (so said universal rumour) at the instigation of a competitor for his post, seized one day while on his return homeward from the castle, thrown down, and subjected to so protracted and so cruel a fustigation that he expired on the morrow. If such was the chastisement prepared for the first personages in the state, what could plebeian offenders expect? Many were the victims, many the backs that smarted, and the limbs crippled or broken. Tobacco vanished, though not *in fumo*, and torn silks strewed the streets or rotted on the dunghills; the mosques were crowded, and the shops deserted. In a few weeks the exemplary semblance of the outward man of the capital might have moved the admiration of the first Wahhabee himself.

Similar measures were enforced throughout Nejed. Fervent Zelators, armed with rods and Corans, and breathing out vengeance upon all "right-hand and left-hand defections," visited the various towns and villages with the happiest results; and

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the entire 'Aared, Sedeyr, Woshem, Yemāmah, and their neighbours, were speedily reformed and remodelled on the pattern of Riad.

But the zeal for revival did not stop here. The "infidels" of Ḳaseem and Ḥaṣa, along with the backsliders of Ḥareeḳ, were now to learn that Feyṣul would not tolerate any longer among them crimes reprobated by the genuine believers, and that they in their turn must conform at least their exterior to the decencies of orthodoxy, whatever might be the fashion of their hearts and minds. Missions, headed by Zelators, were organized, and a crusade against the prevailing scandals of the guilty provinces was set on foot. But in spite of the practical arguments that accompanied the Word, orthodoxy was destined here to meet with but a partial triumph. A strong reaction manifested itself, and in some places, at Bereydah in Ḳaseem for example, and at Zekkārah in Ḥasa, blows were returned with interest, and in one village of Ḳaseem at least, to my knowledge, the ardour of the Zelator was allayed by a sound ducking in a neighbouring pond. A compromise now took place: dresses wherein silk should not exceed a third part, or at most a half, of the material, were permitted, though with a sigh; and tobacco vendors or smokers were henceforth to content themselves with observing decent privacy in the sale or consumption of the forbidden article, on which condition they might do as they chose, unmolested, save in the public streets or market-place. Compulsory attendance at prayers was rarely enforced, and the roll-call of names, customary in the mosques of Nejed, was elsewhere prudently omitted. However, a certain degree of outward conformity had been attained, and with that Feyṣul and his Star Chamber were fain to content themselves for the moment, and hope for better times.

Of the Zelator mission at Ḥā'yel and in Djebel Shomer, with its exit, I have already spoken; further results of the Wahhabee revival remain for mention when our narrative reaches in its course the provinces of the east.

But even in Nejed and in Riad itself the overstretched cord ended by relaxing a little, nor could the unpopularity of the new institution remain wholly concealed. Yet it was kept up, though the cholera, scared no doubt by the tremendous

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outbreak of orthodox severity, had fled the land; nor was the theory of the new censorship changed, only its practical exercise assumed a milder form, while the thing itself was carefully maintained, a bulwark against future heaven-sent scourges or earthly fallings-away, and a powerful administrative engine or rod when required. The slaves were indeed less busy than before, and the domestic visits of rarer occurrence; chastisement was sometimes preceded by admonition, and the dorsal vertebræ of culprits more seldom broken. But the number of the Zelators was constantly filled up, whenever death or retirement occasioned a vacancy; the nomination of each new candidate depending on themselves, and in concert with Feyṣul. Twice every week they have official right to a private audience of the king; the days assigned are Monday and Thursday, the hour sunrise or a little earlier. No small or unimportant favour this from a monarch whose public audiences are at the very most once a month, and who in private is almost inaccessible to all save his prime minister, his negro slaves, and his harem. The Zelators are, in fact, the real council of state; and no question of peace or war, alliance or treaty, but is suggested or modified by them. They represent what we may with all due respect entitle the High Conservative party, amid that inevitable tendency of all organized society to advancement, from which not even Wahhabees are exempt. But more of this and of them hereafter.

Meanwhile I might almost leave my readers to suppose in what light such a body, and those who compose it, are regarded by the mass of the population. Surrounded with all the deference and all the odium consequent on their office and character, they meet everywhere with marks of open respect and covert distrust and hatred. Are a circle of friends met in the freedom of conversation? let a Zelator enter, their voices are hushed; and when talk is resumed, it follows a tack in which the recording angels of Islam themselves would find nothing to modify. Are a bevy of companions walking gaily with too light a gait down the street? at the meeting of a Zelator, all compose their pace, and direct their eyes in momentary modesty on the ground. Is a stealthy lamp lighted at unreasonable hours? at a rap on the shutters suspected for

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that of the Zelator, the "glim is doused," and all is silent in darkness. Or, worse than all, is the forbidden pipe sending up its sinful fumes in some remote corner? at the fatal tap on the outer door, the unholy implement is hastily emptied out into the hearth, and then carefully hidden under the carpet, while everyone hurries to wash his mouth and mustachios, and by the perfume of cloves or aromatic herbs give himself an orthodox smell once more. In short, schoolboys caught out by a severe under-master at an illicit prank, pious ladies surprised in reading the last French novel, or teetotallers suddenly discovered with a half-empty black bottle and tumbler on the table, never look more awkward, more silly, and more alarmed than Nejdeans on these occasions when a Zelator comes upon them.

I was often more especially amused (to anticipate incidents of the following days) by the figure Aboo-'Eysa used to make in such a scrape. He knew the Zelators for what they were, and they too knew him for what he was; but high court protection and a position of wealth and influence in the one party, and an official character not to be insulted with impunity in the other, occasioned a degree of mutual forbearance, curiously constrained and transparently comic. While the fury of religious renovation lasted, Aboo-'Eysa had prudently kept out of harm's way; and if indispensable business drew him to Riad, would pitch a tent without the walls, there with his boon-companions to smoke, eat and drink, and curse the Zelators, nor enter the city save by stealth, and to visit the palace only. Now that the first fervour, like all first fervours, had somewhat cooled down, he ventured on lodging within the town, and only took care to be out of the way on Fridays or at prayer-time. However, while he was in the capital his silken robe judiciously disappeared, his ornamental head-kerchief was folded up and laid aside to make place for an old cotton rag, and he studiously avoided certain devouter quarters of the town and the vicinity of the great Wahhabee family. As for paying any one of them a visit, he would as soon have called on the fiend himself. But when unavoidable necessity or chance brought him in their way, he did his best to look very good, and measured his conversation with suitable decorum of phrase. They, on the other hand, condescendingly winked at frailties

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decently though imperfectly veiled, and affected not to notice what could not be wholly hidden. However, in the moments of mutual absence neither spared the other: Aboo-'Eysa named them "dogs," "hypocrites," and much more; while the fingers of the Zelators tingled to be at the praiseworthy occupation of "purifying his hide," for so the profane technicality of Nejed styles the merited chastisement of dissenters and ill-doers. But it is time to return to our new acquaintance, the occasion of this long digression.

'Abbood, for such was his name, though I never met the like before or after in Arabia Proper, however common it may be in Syria and Lebanon, took a different and a more efficacious mode of espionage than 'Abd-el-Ḥameed had done before him. Affecting to consider us Mahometans, and learned ones too, he entered at once on religious topics, on the true character of Islam, its purity or corruptions, and enquired much after the present teaching and usages of Damascus and the North, evidently in the view of catching us in our words. But he had luckily encountered his match; for every citation of the Coran we replied with two, and proved ourselves intimately acquainted with the "greater" and the "lesser" polytheism of foreign nations and heterodox Mahometans, with the commentaries of Beyḍowee and the tales of the Ḥadeeth, till our friend, now won over to confidence, launched out full-sail on the sea of discussion, and thereby rendered himself equally instructive and interesting to men who had nothing more at heart than to learn the tenets of the sect from one of its most zealous professors, nay, a Zelator in person.

Error, especially on such matters and under such circumstances, inspires a thinking mind with much more compassion than indignation; and pity, if not always akin to love, is at least next door to toleration. We found it easy enough to give certain tokens of sympathy, and even of guarded approval, which encouraged our teacher to a fuller display of doctrine; while we trusted that a favourable report, thus won, might render the minds of his fellows less hostile, or even well-disposed. 'Abbood ended by becoming half a friend, and his regrets at our being, like other Damascenes, yet in the outer porch of darkness, were tempered by a hope, which he did not

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disguise, of at least putting a window into our porch for its better enlightenment.

Other visitors came and went; Aboo-'Eysa too, as in duty bound, called on us towards evening to see if all was well, and how we were lodged. The locality did not much please us, because too near to the royal palace, almost, in fact, belonging to it; besides, the apartments were over large, nor could we arrange them with anything like comfort for their very size; our furniture was too limited for the task, and our means also. So we begged Aboo-'Eysa to look out for us another and a more proportionate dwelling, suited to our modest circumstances and the character of our profession. Many had indeed already demanded medical advice and assistance, nor could any other occupation suit us better in this town. Our friend promised, and kept his word.

Next day, in the forenoon, while we were sauntering about the market-place, we met the minister 'Abd-el-'Azeez, who had that morning returned to the capital. With a smiling face and an air of great benignity he took us aside, and informed us that the king did not consider Riaḍ a proper field for our medical skill; that we had better at once continue our journey to Hofhoof, whither Aboo-'Eysa should conduct us straightway; and that the monarch would furnish each of us with a camel, a new suit of clothes, and money.

To make a bridge of gold (even though the sum offered was small) for a flying enemy is a wise measure, whether in Macedonia or in Nejed; and Feyṣul thought that he could not better ensure his safety from our spells and incantations than by making us his friends, but at a reasonable distance. We, in our innocence, did not yet know the reason of this manœuvre, and attributed it to other and lighter motives. So, instead of acquiescing, we represented to 'Abd-el-'Azeez that our stay at Riaḍ would be alike advantageous to the bodies of the townsmen and to our own purses; whereas an over-speedy departure might sound ill, and prejudice our success even at Hofhoof. He promised to consult Feyṣul once more upon the matter, but gave us to understand that there was little prospect of an "amendment" in the royal decree. Of course our persistence in wishing thus to remain at Riaḍ could have no other effect

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than to confirm the timid suspicions of the old tyrant; but this we knew not.

Meanwhile the privy council assembled around the king in the garden had come to a somewhat similar resolution about the Persians, whom Feyṣul determined to dismiss at the shortest possible notice, though with fair words and some trifling present, but without personal audience or effective redress. For this he had more than one reason; but it was the dread of assassination that worked strongest of all on his evil conscience.

However, Arab prudence made him unwilling to precipitate matters; and a little after noon he sent for Aboo-'Eysa, who immediately went to the garden where his Majesty lay concealed. What passed on that occasion we afterwards learnt in detail from different sources. Feyṣul received Aboo-'Eysa with an air of grave severity, and reproached him for having brought so ill-conditioned a cargo to the palace gates. Our guide made all possible excuses, and was backed up in his apology by the prime minister Maḥboob, a staunch friend of Aboo-'Eysa's, or at least of his presents. For what regarded the Persians, it was resolved on better thoughts to give them some kind of satisfaction; but Feyṣul, ever fearful of treachery, could not yet be persuaded to receive the Nā'ib in person; and accordingly that part of the business was committed to Maḥboob, who was to give the Shirazee a hearing, and afterwards make his report to the king. Then came our affair: here the monarch showed himself extremely refractory, and Maḥboob partook, or seemed to partake, in his uneasiness. Indeed, Feyṣul was half inclined to send us away, not to Ḥaṣa, but by the very route on which we had come; an ominous proceeding for us, and more likely to conclude in having us "packed with post-horse up to heaven," than conveyed by the leisurely pace of camels to Ḳaseem or Shomer. At last the old king softened down, and concluded by saying that we might go on to Ḥaṣa, for the furtherance whereof he again proffered the liberal assistance already notified by 'Abd-el-'Azeez; but both he and his counsellors were decidedly averse to our remaining any longer in Riad.

When the Nā'ib heard this news, he burst out into a new fit

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of passion, and said much of a very undiplomatic nature regarding the king and his ministers; nor could he well understand how a Bedouin, for so he persisted in styling Feyṣul, could treat with such haughty coolness the majesty of the Shah of Persia, represented in his envoy. However there was no help for it, so he smoothed his ruffled brow, chewed a little opium, smoked a nargheelah, and set about drawing up a long list of grievances and damages for the perusal of Maḥboob on their approaching interview.

Our own position was now an awkward one, nor did we exactly know how to amend it. We were thoroughly determined not to quit Riaḍ till after fully satisfying our curiosity relative to its government, people, and whatever else it contained: yet how to prolong our stay? To persist on our own score in remaining, after a twice-repeated order to depart, would have been sheer madness, and must inevitably lead to the worst consequences; concealment or disguise was out of the question. Aboo-'Eysa was no less annoyed than ourselves; our friendship, once commenced at Bereydah, had by frequent intercourse there, and yet more by our journey together from Ḳaseem to Riaḍ, become a real intimacy; and though he did not precisely comprehend our object in so vehemently desiring a longer sojourn in the Wahhabee capital, he sympathized with our vexation at so silly yet so serious an obstacle to our wishes. At last, after much thinking and discussion, he proposed to try a measure with the efficacy of which long experience had rendered him particularly conversant. The king, though obstinate and timorous, was likely in a matter of this sort to let himself ultimately be guided by the advice of his ministers. If Maḥboob and 'Abd-el-'Azeez could be brought round to our cause, a revision of the royal edict might then be confidently expected. Now, incorruptibility was no more a virtue of the Nejdean court than Charles the Second's, or Louis-Philippe's, and that Aboo-'Eysa had the best possible reasons to know. However, even here a direct offer of minted coin would not look well. In this dilemma, two pounds' weight of scented wood, or "'Ood," a special favourite with Arabs, and above all with Nejdeans, might prove a propitiatory offering of good savour, and render our modest petition more acceptable and efficacious.

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This he offered to procure at his own cost, and to manage its presentation. We, my readers may well suppose, made no difficulty. Night had already set in; but Aboo-'Eysa was not the man to delay in a business where time was so precious. He went at once on his quest; and his acquaintance with the people of the town enabled him soon to find the desired perfumes, which he returned to show us, and then departed a second time, without delay, to leave them in our name at the doors of Maḥboob and 'Abd-el-'Azeez. Late in the night he returned, and bade us await in sure hope a more favourable intimation on the morrow.

Nor were his expectations deceived. Before noon he was again summoned to the suburban retreat of royalty, and there told, that since, all things maturely considered, the town of Riad did seriously stand in need of an Æsculapius, we might be permitted to remain in that quality, and freely exercise our profession under Feyṣul's own patronage, without fear of opposition or disquiet.

Thus far was well. But these events, along with others less important but equally significant, had now fairly opened our eyes to the difficulties around us. A suspicious king, a suspicious court, an unfriendly council, a land infamous as the very mouse-trap of Arabia: we could not but see that if one bad hour had been got safely through, others and perhaps worse must be in store, and that a purchased friendship might soon either exact too high a price for its continuation, or even turn to open and fatal enmity. We stood more than ever in need of counsel and support, of one who could point out to us the rocks in our way, and aid us to avoid them. For all this Aboo-'Eysa was evidently our man; yet the insight we had hitherto allowed him into our character and object was hardly sufficient to ensure, and still less to direct, his co-operation. On the other hand, to tell him all was nothing else than to put ourselves neck and heels at his mercy, and to give him the tempting means of purchasing high favour and importance at court by our betrayal. However, all that we had seen or heard of him led us to judge him incapable of similar baseness, and even to think him likely to enter in some measure into our views, and co-operate to their accomplishment.

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Much did Barakāt and I talk over the matter during the following evening. At last we resolved to give Aboo-'Eysa the same degree of confidence which we had placed in Ṭelāl, and that without delay, lest some untoward circumstance should intervene and complicate matters further. I wished Barakāt to take on him the management of this somewhat delicate business, wherein a born Arab was evidently less likely to compromise himself than a foreigner and a European; but he could not make up his mind, and for want of better means I consented to venture on it myself next morning.

After coffee, and what other preliminaries beseemed the occasion, I took our guide apart, and explained to him who we really were, and the scope of our long journey, with everything else requisite for him to know in order to help us efficaciously, and bear an aiding hand in what was yet to do.

Aboo-'Eysa heard in deep attention, and a silence only interrupted by an occasional question, or a passing though amiable reproof of our preceding hesitation in meeting his offered friendship with the confidence it deserved. The conversation lasted till noon drew nigh, and the western shadow of the wall under which we were sitting had shrunk up to a narrow and insufficient line of shelter. Our conclusion was as follows: Firstly, to stand by each other through thick and thin, good fortune and bad, so long as Providence should cast our lot together. Secondly, Aboo-'Eysa engaged himself to bring forward my medical position into the greatest possible prominence, and to ensure me by all ways and means a wide-spread and honourable reputation. Thirdly, that neither of us should quit Riaḍ without the consent and agreement of the other; but, on the contrary, we should mutually wait each other's leisure till Aboo-'Eysa had finished his business in the capital, and we ours, and then set off on our way together. Fourthly, that Aboo-'Eysa should do all in his power to procure me a thorough acquaintance with Ḥaṣa and the eastern provinces. Fifthly and lastly, my friend proposed and earnestly recommended to me a visit to the islands of the Persian Gulf, and, above all, to the kingdom of 'Omān. For this last appendix to our scheme I felt at the time very little inclination, thinking our journey already long enough, especially with the additional delay necessary in Ḥaṣa.

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So we agreed to leave this point open for future discussion. After settling our plans thus far, we rose and returned to the Ḳ'hāwah, where Barakāt was awaiting the result of our conference. To him, as to a young and inexperienced man, Aboo-'Eysa gave much sage advice, and exhorted him to seriousness of demeanour, and reservedness of tongue, particularly while at Riaḍ. We then partook in common of a more cheerful meal than we had enjoyed for many days, well pleased in the security that reciprocal trust affords, and the triple cord which is not easily to be broken.

While these complicated intrigues went on among and around us, several circumstances occurred, which must here find place, because necessary to the thread of the narrative, though I had designedly omitted them hitherto, in order to follow out more distinctly the main affair on which all the rest depended. My readers will accordingly permit me a retrograde step in our story, till we bring it again up to the point thus reached by anticipation, and then continue it after a smooth and methodical course.

I had said some pages back that Djeloo'wee's palace soon appeared to Barakāt and myself not well adapted to our medical avocations, and besides too near the castle of Feyṣul for strangers and "infidels" like ourselves. In consequence, Aboo-'Eysa had promised to look us out a more suitable dwelling-place. Next morning, before we met 'Abd-el-'Azeez, our guide visited us, and told us that a very comfortable abode had been put at our disposition, free of expense. This Aboo-'Eysa had managed through some friend of his at court, and without consulting Feyṣul or his ministers. Without delay we went to look at the proffered quarters.

Leaving the palace of Djeloo'wee, we passed down the great street to the market-place, which we next crossed diagonally, till we had the castle gate opposite to us on the other side; and then threaded a labyrinth of narrow by-streets, till a walk of about eight minutes brought us in front of a high covered passage; through this we entered a broad *impasse*, on either side of which were several small habitations, while a large two-storeyed house closed the farther end. This stately mansion was now tenanted by the Nā'ib Moḥammed-'Alee and his train; its

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original owner, a man of good family, and wealthy in Arab estimation, had become obnoxious to the "Zelators" of the town, and was compelled to anticipate a sound palm-stick thrashing, or worse, by a timely retreat to Ḥasa, where we afterwards met him—one of hundreds in the like predicament. His house was confiscated, not indeed absolutely, but in a provisional manner, by the government, and its vacant walls, by order of Feyṣul, now sheltered the Nā'ib and his companions. Some way down the "Place" on the right, a side door gave admittance to a humbler dwelling, belonging, like many of the town houses hereabouts, to the palace, and rented on lease. It was in every respect fitted to our manner of life; and if its tenants, our predecessors, suffered any inconvenience from evacuating the premises in our favour, this was fully made up to them by the munificent present of six Djedeedahs (a term to be explained afterwards), or about two shillings English, which our free and gracious liberality bestowed upon them. Whence my readers may infer, that the value of money in Riaḍ, and its proportion to house-rent, are not far from what they appear to have been in London under the reign of Edward II., or even later.

Here we were possessors of no less than three apartments: the first a reception-room, or Ḳ'hāwah, near the entrance, with its appropriate vestibule and fireplace; it was long in form and somewhat dark, like most Ḳ'hāwahs at Riaḍ, where the southerly climate and increasing heat renders the construction of apartments subservient to the greatest shelter obtainable from the sun's access, much more than is wont at Ḥā'yel, or even in Ḳaseem and Sedeyr. In the interior, and behind the Ḳ'hāwah, was a courtyard, in the middle of which a fine and odoriferous shrub of the verbena species attested the semi-sentimental rurality of Nejdean townsmen; the practice of nursing one or two plants, to give a city residence something of a country air, not being confined to London and its balcony flower-pots. Within the courtyard stood also a kitchen, separated from the rest of the dwelling. On the other side we had a good-sized chamber, of which I made my druggery and consultation room. Its roof was flat, like that of the Ḳ'hāwah, and both were surrounded by a high parapet; a wooden staircase led up to the one terrace, and a flight of stone steps to the other. Another

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small room had been converted by the late tenants into a store for furniture and provisions not requisite for immediate use, and of this they kept the keys, to our exclusion.

We were here not too far from the market-place, yet at a decorous distance from the palace, and exactly in the quarter where dwell the fewest Zelators and none of the old Wahhabee family; indeed, this part of the town had the reputation, bad or good, of being not only the least bigoted, but even a sort of stronghold for the party of progress, since even Riaḍ owns such. Lastly, we became hereby next-door neighbours to the talkative Nā'ib, whose mixed shrewdness and simplicity, ready tongue and broken Arabic, rendered him always an amusing and sometimes an instructive companion. In short, we thought ourselves fortunate in this second selection of lodgings, and took it for a favourable augury for our business at Riaḍ. Without demur we cheerfully fell to putting all things in order, and became decent housekeepers in our way.

Flour, rice, meat, and coffee were, or rather should have been, regularly furnished us from the palace, of which we were considered the guests. But finding that we did not much stand in need of the royal liberality, and that a little show of independence would do no harm, we were not over-diligent in asking for or even in receiving the supply, and it often went by our easy connivance to the private advantage of the purveyors. Only we insisted rigorously in obtaining our stated allowance of coffee, for it was excellent, and our consumption thereof unbounded. Aboo-'Eysa, who passed two-thirds of his leisure hours under our roof, had set us up in coffee-pots and other requisites; to procure a new mortar, similar to that carried off by the faithless Ḥabbāsh at Bereydah, had been our first care on arriving here. Now our guide was a desperate coffee-drinker, so were also my companion and myself; moreover, we made it a rule that no one should enter our premises without a dose of this nature, at any rate; so that from earliest morn till latest evening our fire was never extinguished, nor had our cups time to dry.

I must here beg my reader's permission for a brief episode or digression on the subject of the above-mentioned beverage. In my quality of an Oriental of many years' standing, I am

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annoyed at the ignorance yet prevailing on so important a matter in the enlightened West; and as a doctor (at least in Arabia), I cannot see with silent indifference the nervous systems of my fellow-men so rudely tampered with, or their mucous membranes so unseasonably drenched, as is too often the case to the west of the Bosporus.

Be it then known, by way of prelude, that coffee though one in name is manifold in fact; nor is every kind of berry entitled to the high qualifications too indiscriminately bestowed on the comprehensive genus. The best coffee, let cavillers say what they will, is that of the Yemen, commonly entitled "Mokha," from the main port of exportation. Now I should be sorry to incur a lawsuit for libel or defamation from our wholesale or retail salesmen; but were the particle NOT prefixed to the countless labels in London shop-windows that bear the name of the Red Sea haven, they would have a more truthy import than what at present they convey. Very little, so little indeed as to be quite inappreciable, of the Mokha or Yemen berry ever finds its way westward of Constantinople. Arabia itself, Syria, and Egypt consume fully two-thirds, and the remainder is almost exclusively absorbed by Turkish and Armenian œsophagi. Nor do these last get for their limited share the best or the purest. Before reaching the harbours of Alexandria, Jaffa, Beyrouth, &c., for further exportation, the Mokhan bales have been, while yet on their way, sifted and resifted, grain by grain, and whatever they may have contained of the hard, rounded, half-transparent, greenish-brown berry, the only one really worth roasting and pounding, has been carefully picked out by experienced fingers; and it is the less generous residue of flattened, opaque, and whitish grains which alone, or almost alone, goes on board the shipping. So constant is this selecting process, that a gradation regular as the degrees on a map may be observed in the quality of Mokha, that is, Yemen, coffee even within the limits of Arabia itself, in proportion as one approaches to or recedes from Wadi Nejrān and the neighbourhood of Mecca, the first stages of the radiating mart. I have myself been times out of number an eyewitness of this sifting; the operation is performed with the utmost seriousness and scrupulous exactness, reminding me of the diligence

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ascribed to American diamond searchers, when scrutinising the torrent sands for their minute but precious treasure.

How this coffee is reared on the plant, how gathered, how stored, my readers will find sufficiently described in Niebuhr's work on Arabia, where he speaks of Yemen and its neighbourhood; a work to which I have already more than once alluded. Truthful like an Englishman, judiciously accurate as a German, that author, unless my experience much belies me, is the *facile princeps* of all modern travellers in Arabia, both for correct observation and descriptive fidelity. Wherever my own way coincided with that of this distinguished explorer, or lay near it, I invariably found the localities and the races, the customs and the institutions, perfectly accordant with the results of his investigation, neither more nor less; the book forms an advantageous contrast to the rhodomontade of some voyagers, and the negligent inaccuracy of others. Occasional allowance must however be made for changes introduced by the lapse of a century; and a line should also be drawn between what Niebuhr states on the authority of his own personal inspection, and what he recounts after hearsay from Arabs and others. This latter species of information is at times unavoidably meagre or even incorrect; and the writer's own want of a thorough familiarity with the Arab tongue cannot be fully made up for even by extensive erudition on other points, and a judgment eminently critical. In this respect our own countryman Lane, if Egypt forbear her title to his nationality, has a positive advantage over the enterprising German; and hence Lane's portrait of the Arab race, or rather of its colonists on the banks of the Nile, is livelier than Niebuhr's, and fuller also. But to return to our cups—coffee-cups I mean: we have yet a word to say on the first and best species, the coffee of Yemen.

This berry quits its native land on three main lines of export —that of the Red Sea, that of the inner Ḥejāz, and that of Ḳaseem. The terminus of the first line is Egypt, of the second Syria, of the third Nejed and Shomer. Hence Egypt and Syria are, of all countries without the frontiers of Arabia, the best supplied with its specific produce, though under the restrictions already stated; and through Alexandria or the Syrian

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seaports Constantinople and the North obtain their diminished share. But this last stage of transport seldom conveys the genuine article, except by the intervention of private arrangements and personal friendship or interest. Where mere sale and traffic are concerned, substitution of an inferior quality, or an adulteration almost equivalent to substitution, frequently takes place in the different storehouses of the coast, till whatever Mokha-marked coffee leaves them for Europe and the West, is often no more like the real offspring of the Yemen plant than the logwood preparations of a London fourth-rate retail wine-seller resemble the pure libations of an Oporto vineyard.

The second species of coffee, by some preferred to that of Yemen, but in my poor opinion inferior to it, is the growth of Abyssinia; its berry is larger, and of a somewhat different and a less heating flavour. It is, however, an excellent species; and whenever the rich land that bears it shall be permitted by man to enjoy the benefits of her God-given fertility, it will probably become an object of extensive cultivation and commerce. With this stops, at least in Eastern opinion and taste, the list of coffee, and begins the list of beans.

Here first and foremost stands the produce of India, with a little, similar to it in every respect, from the plantations of 'Omān. This class supplies almost all coffee-drinkers, from the neighbourhood of Ḍafar to Baṣrah, and thence up to Bagdad and Moṣoul; Arabs, Persians, Turks, Curdes, be they who they may, have there no other beverage. To one unaccustomed to what Yemen supplies, the Indian variety may seem tolerable, or even agreeable. But without any affectation of virtuoso nicety, I must say that for one fresh arrived from Nejed and Ḳaseem it is hardly potable. The distorted and irregular form of the berry, its blackish stain, and above all the absence of the semi-transparent alabaster-like appearance peculiar to the good Yemanite variety, renders the difference between the two kinds appreciable to the unassisted eye, not only to the palate.

It is possible that time and care may eventually render Indian coffee almost a rival of the Yemen, or at least of the Abyssinian. Hitherto it certainly is not, though it might be hard to say to what particular causes, inherent in soil, climate, or cultivation, its inferiority is ascribable.

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American coffee holds, in the judgment of all Orientals, the very last rank; and the deterioration of this product in the New World from what it is in the Old, is no less remarkable than that observed in rice, tea, &c., and is of an analogous character.

Of Batavian coffee I purposely say nothing, having never to my knowledge tasted it. I hear it sometimes praised, but by Europeans; Orientals never mentioned it before me, perhaps they confounded it with the Indian.

While we were yet in the Djowf, I described with sufficient minuteness how the berry is prepared for actual use; nor is the process any way varied in Nejed or other Arab lands. But in Nejed an additional spicing of saffron, cloves, and the like, is still more common; a fact which is easily explained by the want of what stimulus tobacco affords elsewhere. A second consequence of non-smoking among the Arabs is the increased strength of their coffee decoctions in Nejed, and the prodigious frequency of their use; to which we must add the larger "finjans," or coffee-cups, here in fashion. So sure are men, when debarred of one pleasure or excitement, to make it up by another.

Might I be permitted to add, on this occasion, a few lines relative to the famous prohibition of wine enforced by the Coran, and well known to all my readers? Much has been said on the subject, yet not perhaps enough to explain, at least satisfactorily, the Prophet's abstinence on this point. Eastern Christians have invented, for it is a mere invention, a story of Mahomet's having been intoxicated at some time or other, and that while raving drunk he killed his preceptor, the Nestorian monk Boḥeyrah, known in ecclesiastical annals by the Greek name of Sergius; and that it was his intense vexation at this unhappy consequence of the wine-cup which, say they, induced him to prohibit it altogether. A fable which the smallest knowledge of facts and dates suffices to disprove; nor should I have even allowed it a word's notice, had not some Europeans taken it up with an ill-deserved seriousness. Others again, like those who suppose Moses to have prohibited swine's flesh because unwholesome in the East (a motive difficult to reconcile with the long list of other meats, now in daily and not unhealthy use, but equally unlawful for an Israelite), imagined

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that Mahomet, in a fit of zeal worthy Father Mathew, lamented the excesses arising from the abuse of wine among his compatriots, namely, bickerings, frays, bloodshed, and the like; and that on this ground he resolved to root out the wide-spread evil by fulminating his absolute veto on the cause. Now here I would remark that the Arabs of ante-Islamitic ages, though, like all men, liable to an occasional outburst of jollity, were not, however, Irishmen, nor were Connaught wakes the fashion in Nejed; and hence the primal foundation of the parallel is wanting. True indeed that some of the older Arab poets make mention of wine and its exhilarating effects with all the enthusiasm of a Horace or an Anacreon. But poets, as the Coran very justly remarks, "say what they do not do," and are very insufficient witnesses in so grave a matter and so sweeping an imputation. It is true also that some recent Mahometan writers have countenanced the same idea regarding this law; but their ignorance of the past, and their utter and glaring want of critical discernment, render their comments less valuable than they have been sometimes thought. Drunkenness was never an Arab vice, neither before the epoch of Mahomet, nor nowadays among the populations who know not or observe not his prohibition.

What then was the real or, at any rate, the main reason for this strange and, I must add, unwise embargo? unwise certainly, were it founded on no better grounds than what we have just rejected as insufficient or fabulous. The strongest arguments would lead us to assign it, with considerable probability, to the Prophet's antipathy to Christianity, and to a desire to broaden the line of demarcation between his followers and those of Christ.

Wine has, in fact, been not only tolerated by the Founder of Christianity, but even, if I may so say, patronized, and raised to a dignity of the highest religious import; nay, in the belief of three-fourths of the Christian world, absolutely supernatural. Close on its religious and mystical use follows its social quality; and among all nations who own, in Eastern phrase, "the Gospel for their book," that is, are Christians in the most comprehensive sense of the term, wine has always been in high favour, the accompaniment of civilization, of friendship, of

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cheerful and elegant life, of social, domestic, even of political union, and in this view has been everywhere greatly esteemed and largely employed. This Mahomet well knew; his Greek neighbours alone, with whose ways and customs he was by no means unacquainted, might suffice him for a good example of the fact. Meanwhile his seer-like sagacity, in which he had few equals, led him to anticipate from the Christians far more dangerous opponents, and a more lasting and more perilous hostility than whatever might be expected from Jews or Persians; and at the same time the prudent and almost respectful toleration which numbers and strength exacted, rendered pre-eminently necessary the establishment of distinctive nay disjunctive marks, calculated to maintain his followers in a permanent antagonism with those whom they could not lightly despise, nor yet securely persecute. To declare the social, the sacred liquor which had become well nigh typical of Christianity, and in a manner its badge, "unclean," "an abomination," and "the work of the devil," was to set up for his own followers a counter-badge, equally unmistakable and irreconcilable, of a nature to last through all time, of daily occurrence, and of equal application in the mosque that antithesis of the sanctuary, and in the harem that contradiction of the house. Nor has this skilful though deeply injurious prohibition failed of its purposed intent.

This is by no means a solitary example: many other unequivocal indications of the same bent of policy occur in the Mahometan system, whether we view it in the Coran or in tradition cotemporary with its writer. We cannot reasonably ascribe to any other source the profound aversion to all imagery or painting, so essential to the Oriental idea of Christianity, as any of my readers who have chanced to enter a Greek or Armenian church can witness, so hated by Mahomet, who took timely care to instil a similar feeling into his companions and soldiers. From the same source was derived, beyond a doubt, his anathema on bells (if indeed we can by a mere analogy give that name to the contrivances of church going sound that hold the place of bells in the East), less from the fear of disturbing angelic slumbers, as some have politely supposed, than because this signal of prayer was universal among the rival sect.

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Hence, too, Mahomet's barbarous detestation of music, which he classed amid the worst devices of the devil to lead mankind astray, thus confirming Lorenzo's oft-cited sentence on "the man that hath no music in his soul," &c.; lines which can scarcely find a fitter application. Hence, also, his disapproval of prayers offered up between sunrise and the two or three hours that follow it, till the forenoon or Dhoḥa, and also of adorations addressed to the Divinity between the afternoon or "'Aṣr" and sunset, not only to avoid the interposition of Satan's horns, according to the popular commentary, but rather because those are the very times in which Oriental Christians assemble to the daily worship of mass and vespers, still so frequented in their lands. We may even not unreasonably ascribe to the same antithetical disposition, though indirectly manifested, his discouragement of commerce, hinted in the Coran, and more clearly set forth by tradition; and above all, his extreme dislike to ships and seafaring displayed in the authentic but most un-English words of the Ḥejazee camel-driver: "Men nezel' el-baḥrĕ morreteyni f'ḳad kefer"—"He who twice embarks on sea is a very infidel." In fact, commerce has, with few exceptions, gone no less steadily hand-in-hand with Christianity, than its decline and stagnation have with Islam; and the religion which selected its first vicarious chief from a fisherman's boat, has done much to whiten the sea with those countless sails, the object of Mahomet's instinctive distrust and aversion.

In a word, to set his religion and his followers in diametrical opposition to Christianity and Christians was a main feature of Mahomet's plan, and in this he fully succeeded; nor have a thousand years and more brought nigher by one hair's breadth sects whose very badge denotes the "strong antipathy" of contradictory terms. Next after Christianity there remained in Arabia itself two other principles, also antagonists of Islam, and against whose influence certain precautions were necessary, but in an inferior degree: I mean Judaism and Paganism. From the former a sufficient distinction was ensured by the Ca'abah-directed adoration, by the use of camel's flesh, prohibited in the older law, by the peculiar modifications of Islamitic polygamy, and many other points too numerous for reckoning here. From the Pagans or Sabæans of Arabia, such as they

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were, Mahomet had comparatively little to fear, either in the way of direct opposition, or of assimilation. Compromise was of itself impossible, nor was the struggle with these opponents likely to be of long duration or of doubtful exit. But in regard to Christianity the position was very different; a contest whose length might equal that of the ages lay before; the hostile forces seemed not unequally balanced, while there existed enough on either side of a kindred nature to render the danger of some compromise fatal to the very essence of Islam not wholly improbable, when intercourse and time should have familiarized minds wearied by long war and controversy. Accordingly, special distinctions, and a counter-current pervading each detail of daily life, was here requisite to keep up a rivalry of dissimilarity essential to the existence of the Islamitic sect as such.

Succeeding centuries confirmed both the reality of the danger, and the importance of the measures taken in advance against it; the history of the ascetic brotherhoods and secret sects of the East, from the Dardanelles to the Indus, illustrates either point, and proves how near the verge of dissolution Islam was brought more than once by the indirect infiltration of expansive ideas and Christian thought. Should time and circumstances permit, the subject were worthy of a fuller illustration than it has yet received: for the moment I must, though with regret, pass it by, and return to Mahomet where we left him, ordering like a skilful captain his battle-array for dubious conflict.

To remind his followers daily and hourly what religion, what organisation they belonged to, by a series of constantly recurring rites and duties, short enough not to tire, yet so frequently renewed as to render forgetfulness impossible; while each prayer, each formula, should contain a recapitulation of the vital dogma, a quintessence of the distinguishing spirit, stimulating in its very monotony, copious in its briefness; and at the same time to make them no less feel themselves always distinct from all other sects, opposed to all others, incompatible with all others —such was the end proposed by the Prophet, and in great measure attained. With this steadily held in view, and embodied in practice, he could well afford certain half-conciliatory phrases and polite reticences towards a religion feared though

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hated; while combated, yet exacting a certain moderation, and the regard due to power and permanence.

The subject is important, and my readers will, I trust, afford me their patience in this long interpolation of my narrative, and allow me to revert a moment to its first occasion, the noted prohibition of the grape-juice. In this Mahomet had a second and simultaneous object in view, less distinct perhaps even to himself, yet not less efficacious. To promote the union of his followers amongst themselves in religion and war, to identify these two ends in one, and for this to dissuade and discourage all other union which might tend to divert their attention elsewhere, and thereby diminish the undivided energy of concentration, was a project worthy of the Meccan Prophet, and the means adopted to its realisation were alike characteristic of the system and the man. Thus, in the first place, he endeavoured to ensure the frequent assemblage of the "believers" not once but five times a day, in the legal, I had almost said the official, prayers; while he gave to those very prayers that military turn and semblance which must strike the most superficial observer. Is it a regiment with a drill-sergeant at its head, or a band of worshippers with an Imām? is a question naturally occurring to any one who comes on a body of Mahometans, few or many, in a mosque, or under the open sky, when engaged in their stated and national prayers. Again, the whole frame of government, of civil, judicial, and military administration, was constructed not, like in Christianity, alongside of religion and distinct from it, though co-operative; but interwoven with it, or rather forming but one and the same system, and composing with the distinctive creed itself a unity no less real than that presented by two sides of the same medal, or two hands of the same body. And thus again he sets before his followers the yearly "Ghazoo," or war against infidels, as a main, nay, the main object of their corporate existence, a primal duty, an essential condition.

This was much; but more yet was requisite to ensure the attainment of a design difficult because comprehensive; and measures to prevent and exclude must be added to positive injunctions and observances. Accordingly, whatever might distract the attention or disperse the energy of the "believers"

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through other spheres of thought and action, was to be so far as possible avoided, discouraged, or prohibited. Commerce and trade were represented as unbecoming a true Muslim, and even agriculture found little favour in the eyes of the son of 'Abd-Allah. "Angels visit not a house where a plough is laid up" are words of the Meccan Prophet recorded by his favourite concubine 'Eyshah, that Atys of Islam, and they require no comment. But social life yet remained—whether that more external portion, consisting principally in what we entitle by a somewhat inadequate term, "diversions;" or that more intimate, well known and dear to every Christian, above all to every Teutonic heart, the life of the family — *Home*. Both were sacrificed to the Moloch of military and fanatical existence.

Mahomet knew that men will not gather together for social pleasure without some amusement, which may serve at once for the link and the symbol of their union. He knew it, and let fall his withering anathema on whatever could become such a link and symbol. Games of chance, recitations of literature and poetry, scenic representations, music, nay, conversation in which the name of God should not be the staple of discourse, were all censured, stigmatized, or absolutely forbidden. Of this we have undoubted and cotemporary records. But among all means invented by human ingenuity, or God-sent in mercy, for cheering the gloom of life, and drawing together in friendship, intimacy, and mirth, none equals the juice of the grape, the liquid soul of social intercourse, the promoter of good will, of civilization, of kindly and expansive brotherhood. This then was to be more especially anathematized, this more severely and decidedly prohibited. Nor is it perhaps an exaggerated phrase to add, that by few of his blighting enactments did Mahomet go further to curse his followers with that sterile incapacity of progress, association, tolerance, and improvement, which has rendered them the admiration of kindred despotism, the hatred and the byword of the Christian, nay, even of the Pagan world, than when he ordered his followers to shun wine as a work of the devil, and banished its use from among the nations of Islam.

Did the limits of my present work permit me to cite the

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annals of Arab history, and the poetical memorials of ante-Islamitic life and society, my readers would be better able to appreciate the degree of civilization already attained by a large portion of the Arab race, and the share borne by conviviality and merry-making in national advancement. But this topic requires a separate treatise and untired perusers; mine have been already dragged across half the Peninsula, and the other half lies before them. Gladly would I permit myself a few quotations from the Anacreontic songs above alluded to; but they must be full and many to furnish anything like proof or even illustration; conditions incompatible with the restrictions of my actual scope.

Further, but always to the same stifling result, wives and children were, according to Mahomet, "a dangerous temptation;" and all the bloom of domestic attachment and family ties was blighted in the bud by enactments rendering marriage no better than mere concubinage, while polygamy and facile divorce by a natural consequence divided the children from their parents, and set the one against the other, till the dwelling of the Mahometan resembles alternately the stable of beasts, or the battle-field of the twin founders of Roman legend. Those of my readers who may have had the patience to wade through the bloody and impure scenes of a Mahometan dynasty, may there have seen represented on the theatre of royal or sultanic life what passes in the domicile of the peasant or the shop-keeper in the lands cursed with the Coran.

Thus the whole energy, the whole existence, of his followers was, in Mahomet's idea, to centre in three objects and three alone—prayers, war, and women. The first and second a duty, the third a pastime.

That a state of life wherein no pleasure, no diversion, no by-work was to be tolerated, save one of the merest and the lowest sensuality, might lead yet a step further, and conduce to the prevalence of nameless vices, and "disgrace baboons are free from," in Cowper's words, was a result too probable to escape the keen foresight of Mahomet, and he himself predicted it in a sentence recorded by tradition, "I fear for my sect the crimes of Sodom and their punishment." Nor needs it a seer to understand that man when debarred from lawful enjoyment will seek

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unlawful, and that where women are too degraded for respect, they may be also too despised for love. But while he foresaw he also prudently tolerated; and the slight, nay almost nominal chastisement denounced on this class of offenders in his code, anticipated the frequency of the evil, while it opposed the decent censure of an insufficient penalty.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," is an old and true saying; one may add that it goes far to make him a wicked one. Fighting and praying, praying and fighting, with an occasional intercalary episode of mere and ignoble sensuality, may suffice to absorb the energies of warriors in the first flush of conquest, and of zealots yet blood-hot with recent fanaticism. But when these stimulants, powerful as they undoubtedly are, come to flag or fail, as at length they must, on what is the weariness and satiation of the mind to fall back? Not on love, for that has been debased to lust; not on domestic ties, divorce and polygamy have sapped them; not on wine, games, and mirth, for they are inventions of the devil; not on agriculture, under penalty of the privation of angelic visits; not on commerce, for it is a turning aside from the "All-Powerful, the Nourisher," to created means; not on science, for "much enquiry is heresy," the Prophet has declared it. It is hard to see how one can blame a horse so straitly hedged in for leaping the fence, unless, indeed, he lies down to rot in ordure and inaction.

That such is the natural, the simply inevitable tendency of Mahometan institutions, among which the prohibition of wine may stand as a fair though not the most important sample, appears to me to be perfectly evident, and will so, I think, to any who are even in a moderate degree conversant with human nature. Results are the tests of systems; and narrowness of mind, frightful corruption or rather extinction of morality, cruel or desolating war on the frontiers; within, endless discord in all its forms, family, social, and civil, convulsive fanaticism alternating with lethargic torpor, transient vigour followed by long and irremediable decay, such is the general history of Mahometan governments and races. And that such is actually and visibly the case, has been already shown in part by the existing development and course of events in that model state,

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of genuine Islam, that Utopia of Coranism, the Wahhabee empire, and will even more appear in all its odious lucidity through the further course of this narrative—the recital of what has been seen by the eye, and heard by the ear, not from far off, but on the very spot.

I am well aware of individual, nay, even of national though transitory exceptions to the general rule. Under the worst systems good may sometimes spring up and even flourish for a while, just as evil may under the very best. Human nature is constituted to react against its ruin, much in the same way that it reacts but too often against its reparation; and even the Coran cannot wholly stifle the germs of family love, of conjugal attachment, of generous activity, of kindly toleration, of wholesome civilization; nor always prevent them from coming to at least a stinted maturity and bearing abnormal fruit. This holds good in all lands and with all people, but more especially among the Arab race, highly endowed with the choicest gifts of nature, and above all with an elastic and irrepressible vitality. It is by dint of fixing the attention on such happy though rare exceptions, on such fortunate and unintended anomalies, that some writers of cultivated minds and no contemptible judgment have, as I must modestly yet seriously hold, strangely deluded themselves, or sought to delude, into ascribing to the Coran what is in fact in spite of the Coran, and extolling Islam for the results of reaction against Islam—in a word, putting the irregularity for the rule, and the antagonism for the principle. With equal justice might we give Charles I. credit for the abolition of the Star Chamber, or ascribe the Habeas Corpus Act to the political conscience of his royal son.

Reaction social, political, national, and religious has in truth been often and widely at work within the territories of Mahometanism, and sometimes it has produced admirable results, and sometimes monstrous. This is the inevitable law of that process, wherever called into existence, physical or moral. But it is only justice to see in what is worthy of praise the true tendency of the reacting mind, while in the hideous excesses too frequently near allied with better things, we mark the brutalising degradation induced by the yoke long worn,

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and at last spurned and broken. Men are not born beasts, but they may be almost made such.

And here again, to return to the land of our travels, we have already observed somewhat of this same inevitable reaction within the Arabian peninsula; more, and of a deeper character, is still to come. But my readers may not unreasonably think that we have dwelt enough for the present on this matter, so I will hasten to reconduct them to our Ḳ'hāwah, where coffee-cups led us on to wine-cups, and wine to the whole theory of Islam, at least in the intention of its founder.

Installed in the manner already described, and with a month and more of quiet residence before us, we assorted our domestic arrangements, and agreed on a sort of division of labour. Aboo-'Eysa was to keep up what I may call our foreign relations, to bring us news from court, put the great ones there into good humour with us, and give us everywhere a first-rate medical reputation. Barakāt was to do the household work, purchase daily necessaries, cook when occasion required it—all, in short, except the coffee department, which Aboo-'Eysa reserved to himself. For myself, I was to be the great and learned Æsculapius, pound medicines, treat the cases, "look wiser than any man could possibly be," with Lord Thurlow, and talk correspondingly.

Certainly we had not to complain of want of occupation. But before introducing the motley crowd that besieges our door, or unravelling the threads of the strange intrigues which ran through this period of our travelling life like the underplot of a novel, and ended, novel-like, in a wild catastrophe, let us take a morning stroll through the town, and obtain thereby a general knowledge of Riaḍ and its inhabitants.

It is about sunrise; little folks like ourselves are up and stirring, and great ones, like the king and his court, have lain down to sleep. What! to sleep? Even so; for having all in Wahhabee devoutness risen by starlight to anticipate congregational morning prayers, with private protestations and Coranic readings to their hearts' content, and having next assisted at the protracted ceremonies of matutinal worship, drawled out to a most intolerable length by some sour-looking "Zelator" or "Meṭow'waa'" (my readers are by this time familiar with

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these terms, and will not require their repeated explanation), they have now turned in again for a subsidiary nap of about two hours, till a suitable elevation of the sun in the forenoon shall reawake them to the supererogatory prayers of Dhoḥa, and then to daily life. However, the less dignified or less devout, like ourselves, are up and about their business, enjoying too the cool air, for the sun's first rays are tempered by a light mist, habitual in this valley during the winter half of the year.

We wish to buy dates, onions, and butter—all three first-rate articles in the 'Aareḍ. Dates are here of many varieties; the red ones are the best, but certain long yellow dates, without kernels, are particularly cheap and of good flavour. As for the onions of 'Aareḍ, I never saw the like elsewhere, either for size or quality. Pity that the angels of Islam do not agree with me in approving them; hence good Wahhabees can only eat onions with the precaution of careful mouth-rinsing and hand-washing afterwards, especially if prayer-time be near, lest the odour—not of sanctity—should compel the guardian spirits to keep their distance, and thus leave the worshippers to unassisted and defective devotions. Luckily soap or potash is in plenty, and besides there are here many not good Wahhabees, and we are of their number. Butter is whitish, and sold in the form of small round cakes, much as in Ḳaseem; my Indian readers will not require the remark that this delicacy has to be constantly kept in water to prevent its melting.

We wrap our head-gear, like true Arabs, round our chins, put on our grave-looking black cloaks, take each a long stick in hand, and thread the narrow streets intermediate between our house and the market-place at a funeral pace, and speaking in an undertone. Those whom we meet salute us, or we salute them; be it known that the lesser number should always be the first to salute the greater, he who rides him who walks, he who walks him who stands, the stander the sitter, and so forth; but never should a man salute a woman; difference of age or even of rank between men does not enter into the general rules touching the priority of salutation. If those whom we have accosted happen to be acquaintances or patients, or should they belong to the latitudinarian school, our salutation is duly returned. But if, by ill fortune, they appertain to the strict

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and high orthodox party, an under-look with a half-scowl in silence is their only answer to our greeting. Whereat we smile, Malvolio-like, and pass on.

At last we reach the market-place; it is full of women and peasants, selling exactly what we want to buy, besides meat, firewood, milk, &c., &c.; around are customers, come on errands like our own. We single out a tempting basket of dates, and begin haggling with the unbeautiful Phyllis, seated beside her rural store. We find the price too high. "By Him who protects Feyṣul," answers she, "I am the loser at that price." We insist. "By Him who shall grant Feyṣul a long life, I cannot bate it," she replies. We have nothing to oppose to such tremendous asseverations, and accede or pass on, as the case may be.

Half of the shops, namely, those containing grocery, household articles of use, shoemakers' stalls and smithies, are already open and busily thronged. For the capital of a strongly centralized empire is always full of strangers, come will they nill they on their several affairs. But around the butchers' shops awaits the greatest human and canine crowd: my readers, I doubt not, know that the only licensed scavengers throughout the East are the dogs. Nejdeans are great flesh-eaters, and no wonder, considering the cheapness of meat (a fine fat sheep costs at most five shillings, often less), and the keenness of mountaineer appetites. I wish that the police regulations of the city would enforce a little more cleanliness about these numerous shambles; every refuse is left to cumber the ground at scarce two yards' distance. But dogs and dry air much alleviate the nuisance—a remark I made before at Ḥā'yel and Bereydah; it holds true for all Central Arabia.

But before we pursue our walk, let us consider a little more closely the personages now gathered on the space frowned over by the high castle walls, and limited by the massive colonnade of Feyṣul's secret gallery, and the shops and houses which complete the irregular square. Some townsmen of good appearance are already present, nor does their outer semblance much differ from the wont of Shomer or Ḳaseem, except by a greater simplicity of dress and a somewhat lower stature and duskier complexion. Perhaps the general absence of the long "love-locks," so general in the two districts above mentioned, is the

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most remarkable feature of diversity. But there are many strangers here too, and some hardly less foreigners than ourselves. That slender and swarthy form, clad in a saffron-dyed vest of a closer cut than the ample Nejdean shirt, with a crooked dagger at his girdle, and a short yellow stick in his hand, is a native of the outskirts of 'Omān, a land with which the Wahhabees have now not unfrequent nor always friendly doings. That other in a party-coloured overdress, with a large blue turban fringed red and yellow, overshadowing a cast of features totally unlike those of Central Arabia, and somewhat verging on the Persian or the Indian type, is an inhabitant of Baḥreyn; commerce or tribute has dragged him here, sore against his will; for, like his 'Omanite brother, with whom he appears on terms of great familiarity, he is only thinking how to make the best of a bad bargain, and then get away faster than he came. The servants of our friend the Nā'ib, with their rakish Bagdad air, and the wrinkled ill-tempered Meccans, may be easily distinguished in the crowd. But here comes a procession; it is a great man from Medinah, detesting and detested by all around, who, with his numerous attendants richly clad, himself rustling in silk and embroidery, has found his way to Riaḍ on business of high import; perhaps to intercede, but in vain, for his friends in 'Oneyzah, perhaps to concert some wicked scheme in the Wahhabee interest for the downfall of the present Shereef. Be that as it may, all frown at him, and he frowns at all: I know not on which side is the deeper contempt and hatred.

Close by I see a tall slender figure, remarkably handsome, and clad in a not inelegant though unadorned dress. It is Rāfia', one of the Sedeyree family, a chief esteemed alike for courage in war and for prudence in peace; but now, like all his relatives, under an official cloud, because belonging to the too-national party of the province, and suspected of a want of sincere attachment to the 'Aareḍ dynasty. Possibly these suspicions are not wholly out of place; and were it known at court, as it is, though under the rose, to Aboo-'Eysa and myself, that those thin lips not unfrequently inhale a certain smoke of American origin, Rāfia' would, I fear, be held for even worse than he is at present. Territorial disputes furnish the pretext of his presence here; the desire of his kinsman 'Abd-el-Maḥsin-

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es-Sedeyree to find out what chance he has of being reinstated in his ancestral authority, is the real but hidden motive. A reference to our day's halt at Mejmaa', in the preceding chapter, will explain all this to my readers, should they have forgotten the causes of disaffection among the nobles of Sedeyr.

Then pushes along through the crowd, dragging his cloak with Bedouin carelessness on the ground till its lower edge becomes an irregular fringe of torn thread, a chief of 'Oṭeybah or Ajmān. Formerly masters, one of Western, the other of Eastern Nejed, during the anarchy which followed the Egyptian war, these tribes were the first to feel the sword of 'Abd-Allah, son of Feyṣul, and after counting their slaughtered warriors by hundreds, and their plundered camels by thousands, reluctantly assumed the semblance of compliance and the reality of submission. Now compelled, like Pope's ghosts, to haunt the places where their freedom died, they pay melancholy visits to Riaḍ, and loiter for months together in its streets, awaiting an audience of their "Uncle" Feyṣul, who gives them to drink full draughts from the bitter cup of contempt and conquest. *Væ victis* in Arabia and all over the world. Nor are our Bedouin friends much to be pitied, for they have only got what they well deserve, did they not meet it at the hands of men almost or quite as great robbers and ruinous tyrants as themselves.

Amid the rabble are many other elements, exotic to Riaḍ, though never wholly absent from it. Camel drivers from Zulphah, who in their frequent intercourse with Zobeyr and Baṣrah, have alloyed Wahhabee gravity and Nejdean decency with the devil-may-care way of those ambiguous lands half Shiya'ee, half infidel; some ill-conditioned youth, who having run away from his father or the Meṭow'waa' at Riaḍ, has awhile sought liberty and fortune among the sailors of Koweyt or Ṭāroot, and returned with morals and manners worthy of Wapping or Portsmouth, for Jack-tars are much the same everywhere; some thin Yemanee pedlar, come up by Wadi Nejrān and Dowāsir to slip quietly in and out through the streets of the capital and laugh at all he sees; perhaps some Belooch or Candahar darweesh, like those who accompanied us a month ago to Bereydah, and who here awaits companions

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with whom to cross the eastern arm of the desert on his way to the Persian Gulf; mixed with these, the beggars of Dowāsir, more fanatic, more viciously ill-tempered, and more narrow in heart and head than the men of 'Aareḍ themselves, with the addition of a laziness, meanness, and avarice quite their own; close by, some young, lean, consumptive-looking student, who, cursed with a genius, has come to study at Riaḍ, where he lives on the Coran and the scanty alms of the palace; his head full of true orthodox learning, and his belly empty or nearly so; and others less significant, each on "his business and desire, such as it is," might an Arab Hamlet say.

Barakāt and I resolved on continuing our walk through the town. Riaḍ is divided into four quarters: one the north-eastern, to which the palaces of the royal family, the houses of the state officers, and the richer class of proprietors and government men belong. Here the dwellings are in general high, and the streets tolerably straight and not over narrow; but the ground level is low, and it is perhaps the least healthy locality of all. Next the north-western, where we are lodged; a large irregular mass of houses, varying in size and keeping from the best to the worst; here strangers, and often certain equivocal characters, never wanting in large towns, however strictly regulated, chiefly abide; here too are many noted for disaffection, and harbouring other tenets than those of the son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb, men prone to old Arab ways and customs in "Church and State," to borrow our own analogous phrase; here are country chiefs, here Bedouins and natives of Zulphah and the outskirts find a lodging; here, if anywhere, is tobacco smoked or sold, and the Coran neglected in proportion. However, I would not have my readers to think our entire neighbourhood so absolutely disreputable. Even here certain virtuous Meṭow'waa's and holy Zelators shine like lights in a dark place, and serve for good examples or spies among a population highly edified, no doubt, by the very virtue that it has not the courage to imitate.

But we gladly turn away our eyes from so dreary a view to refresh them by a survey of the south-western quarter, the chosen abode of formalism and orthodoxy. In this section of Riaḍ inhabit the most zealous Meṭow'waa's, the most energetic

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Zelators, here are the most irreproachable five-prayers-a-day Nejdeans, and all the flower of Wahhabee purity. Above all, here dwell the principal survivors of the family of the great religious Founder, the posterity of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb escaped from the Egyptian sword, and free from every stain of foreign contamination. Mosques of primitive simplicity and ample space, where the great dogma, not however confined to Riaḍ, that "we are exactly in the right, and every one else is in the wrong," is daily inculcated to crowds of auditors, overjoyed to find Paradise all theirs and none's but theirs; smaller oratories or Muṣallas, wells for ablution, and Ca'abah-directed niches adorn every corner, and fill up every interval of house or orchard. The streets of this quarter are open, and the air healthy, so that the invisible blessing is seconded by sensible and visible privileges of Providence. Think not, gentle reader, that I am indulging in gratuitous or self-invented irony; I am only rendering expression for expression, and almost word for word, the talk of true Wahhabees, when describing the model quarter of their model city. This section of the town is spacious and well-peopled, and flourishes, the citadel of national and religious intolerance, pious pride, and genuine Islam, not without a considerable dash of covert immorality and licensed vice, suitable in those who hold orthodoxy for the only virtue, heterodoxy the only evil or crime.

Lastly, the south-eastern quarter, entitled the "Khaziḳ;" it is also large, and more thickly inhabited than any other, but deficient in individuals of note and wealth; here the lower classes of the population find in general their abode, and peasants and other incomers from the surrounding villages their lodging. This is naturally the worst built and worst kept part of the town, the ground too is low, and the air not healthy; I was told that the ravages of the cholera here in 1854–5 were fearful, and can well believe it.

There is no distinct separation otherwise than by broad streets between these several quarters, no gates, no wall of division. However, each is really considered as a municipal whole—"circle," a Parisian might call it (a ridiculous denomination, because it implies continual interstices or intersections)—and each one has its own name, but I have forgotten

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those given to the three first sections. The word "Khaziḳ," applied to the fourth, signifies "crowded" or "stifling." In the second and fourth quarters we meet with hardly any house-enclosed gardens or orchards; a few occur in the first, and more in the third; but the general rule of Nejed that the gardens should be for the most part without the town-circuit, holds good in Riaḍ also.

The junction-point or centre in which these divisions meet and intersect is the market-place, with the royal palace adjoining it on one side, and the great mosque or Djāmia' on the other; this word Djāmia' means, literally, "collecting" or "uniting," because here attends the great concourse of Friday worshippers to the full and official performance of public service, elsewhere somewhat curtailed. Hence, too, Friday itself is called "Djema'," i. e. "collection." In no Nejdean town is there more than one authentic Djāmia'; the other places of prayer are entitled "Mesjids," or, if small, "Muṣallas." In this point they conform themselves better than other Mahometans to the tradition of the Prophet, who would never have approved the multiplication of Djāmia's, customary in Syria, Egypt, Turkey, &c. The Djāmia' of Riaḍ is a large flat-roofed parallelogram, supported on square wooden pillars thickly coated with earth; the building is low, and has no pretensions to architectural beauty. Barakāt and myself calculated the space between the long rows of columns, and found that it could contain above two thousand individuals at a time; and an equal number can without difficulty find their place within the open court-yard in front. Now Mahometans when at prayer leave a considerable space between their ranks to allow room for prostration without striking their heads on the heels of the row before them; and hence double the above number, namely, a second two thousand, might easily be admitted within the Djāmia' itself, and as many within the walled court, would they content themselves with sitting or standing. Whence my readers may conclude the size of this huge but most inelegant construction. Tower or "Ma'dinah" (minaret, we generally call it) there is none; but in its stead a small platform slightly raised from the roof-level; above the Miḥrab, or station allotted to the Imām at time of prayers, there stands on the

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roof a sort of closet or small apartment, into which old Feyṣul finds admittance on Fridays by the covered gallery before described, and acts invisible Imām to the assembly below. No mats or carpets; reason why—Mahomet and his companions the Ṣaḥḥābah did not employ such; in compensation, the ground is strewed with small pebbles, needlessly annoying to the shinbones and knees of the faithful.

Once more I must refer those of my readers who are unacquainted with the formalities of Mahometan prayer to Lane's minute and accurate description. However, I cannot dispense with noticing some slight differences here prevailing in that function; slight, I mean, in the eyes of non-Islamitic observers, but of the highest importance amongst the "believers;" these differences give Wahhabee worship a peculiar type, and become specific badges of the sect, like kneeling or sitting, surplice or black gown, in our own seventeenth century—nay, even later.

In the first place, our Nejdean friends do not esteem ablution with water before prayer to be of such imperious necessity as do ordinary Mahometans; the least pretext, often mere laziness, suffices to substitute for it the brief ceremonies of "Tey'yummam," described by Lane. Not that water is scarce; Riaḍ (to say nothing of other Nejdean towns, where, however, the same negligence prevails) is full of wells, and every source has by its side the little reservoir for partial or complete ablution ("Weḍoo," or "Ghaṣel"); but in this carelessness the Wahhabees really copy the Prophet, who, if tradition paint him true, was by no means scrupulous on this point.

Secondly, they often enter the mosque, Djāmia', or Muṣalla, without taking off their shoes, or rather sandals, and will even wear them while saying their prayers, a strange sight and a scandalous to any ordinary Mahometan. When questioned on the lawfulness of this proceeding, they will reply by way of explanation or apology, "'Arḍōna ṭāhirah," "Our ground is pure;" though what particular claim their ground has to such transcendent purity, I never could learn. I fancy that the asperity of its pebbles, and the frequent occurrence of small thorns, is a truer reason for their remaining shod. Be that as it may, a Shāfia' of Damascus or a Mālekee of Egypt would be

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little edified by the spectacle. However, the precedent of Mahomet, who is reported to have sometimes kept his boots on during prayer, comes in here again to their aid.

Thirdly, their Ādan, or proclamation of prayer, is just half the length of that common in other Mahometan countries: what is elsewhere repeated four times, the Wahhabee repeats only twice; what others say twice, they once. In this, again, they keep close to early tradition. And all additional phrases and embellishments, elsewhere subjoined from time to time in honour of the Prophet, the Ṣaḥḥābah, &c., are here studiously rejected.

Fourthly, during prayer time they are much less careful than other Mahometans to avoid irregular movements and slight deviations of posture. In this, too, no less than in the preceding differences just noticed, I doubt not that the Wahhabees come much nearer to the prayer, first said at Medinah—where Belāl was Mu'eḍḍin, Mahomet himself Imām, and the Ṣaḥḥābah the congregation—than do their Mahometan brethren of other countries. For, after all, the first founder of Islam and his associates were Arabs, and, because such, were assuredly not over nice about minute ceremonies, nor inclined to fetter themselves with scrupulous detail. The extreme precision observed nowadays by Shāfi'ees, Mālekees, and Ḥanefees at Damascus, Cairo, and Constantinople, savours much more of the Persian, the Turk, and the Curde, nay, the Greek, than of the Arab, less punctilious than they, not with man only, but even with God Himself. Consequently in this point also we may consider the Wahhabees to be more correct and more justly discriminating than the other sects of Islam.

However, modern Mahometans in general are of a different opinion; and three years since a very amusing instance of this occurred at Riaḍ. The Sheykh Moḥammed-el-Bekree, a Damascene of some importance in his native city, and an especial authority in matters of religion and law, arrived in the Nejdean capital during the autumn of 1861. What wind blew him thither I do not know for certain; probably, like many others of similar character, he had found Damascus, Fu'ad Basha, and the Commissioners, rather too hot for him after the affair of July in the preceding year, and thought a temporary absence

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from the Turkish territory no more than prudent. Whatever the cause, he came from Mecca to Riaḍ, where he was announced for a learned doctor and master in Israel, at least among the Shāfi'ees. Feyṣul received him honourably, and the city judge, or Ḳaḍee, himself, 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, great-grandson of the first Wahhabee, claimed the honour of making him his guest. All at first went on very well; and Arab politeness kept down the antipathy of sectarianism and the irritation of controversy. At last Friday came, and the Bekree, who had hitherto avoided joining the Wahhabees in any public worship, could not on that day decently decline the invitation of his host, himself the Khaṭeeb or preacher on the occasion. To the mosque he went, framed, like a good Muslim, his intention of union in spirit only with what should be truly orthodox, and disavowal of any schismatical brotherhood, and stood up amid the foremost ranks to prayer. When, alas! the Imām on duty, a Meṭow'waa' of the town, after the initial Tekbeer-el-Iḥrām (see Lane), with which commences the worship in its strictest sense, and while engaged in reciting the Fāṭiḥah, permitted, horrible to relate, his hands, instead of their due and decent folding on his breast, to become occupied in trifling with the corners of his head-gear, and arranging the collar of his shirt. At this sight the pent-up zeal and indignation of the Bekree could be restrained no longer; to continue his prayers with so indecorous an Imām for precentor would have been worse than omitting them altogether. "Allahomma, ena noweytu'l-kharooj min-eṣ Ṣalah," "O God, I purpose quitting the prayer," he called out at the very top of his voice, turned abruptly round, and left the mosque in fearful excitement.

Of course the congregation finished their service as usual, an earthquake would not have hindered them from that. But no sooner had the concluding "Es-salāmŭ 'aleykum w'raḥmet-Ullāh" given the signal of dismissal, than old and young, high and low, great and small, rushed furiously to the house of 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, where Moḥammed-el-Bekree was sitting alone on his mat in supreme dudgeon, to exact from him an account for his scandalous behaviour. Had he been a Nejdean he would have made a prudent apology, or rather he would never have compromised himself at all. But he was a Syrian, and a

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Damascene, the most irascible of all Syrians, and now his blood was fully up. So he answered them by a volley of abuse, giving them to understand, in the clearest Arabic, that they, their prayers, their sect, their founder, were all impious, abominable schismatics, heretics, infidels, and worse than infidels. Now the dammed up waters on the other side found an outlet; *tu quoques* and worse showered on him from all quarters, and well for the Bekree that he was in Nejed, where a first impulse, however violent, is seldom or never acted on. But the by-standers gave him the broadest hints what they thought of him and of his doings, and so left him for the present. The Bekree imagined that the storm had now blown over. But ere evening he received a message from Feyṣul, warning him that he had better make himself scarce that very night, for that the king himself could not ensure him safety on the morrow. Nejdean anger is, in fact, no fire of straw, it burns hotter the second day than the first, and the third than the second. Moḥammed-el-Bekree took the advice, and before Saturday morning dawned was far away from Riaḍ on his road to Ḥaṣa.

The Khoṭbah, or sermon, an essential part of Friday prayers, is very peculiar here. All mention of caliphs, Ṣaḥḥābah, and whatever might seem to imply personal or hereditary excellence among men, is left out. Mahomet alone finds grace, but in few words, and with none of the rhetorical amplifications which adorn his name elsewhere. The name of the Sultan of Constantinople is also omitted, and in its stead comes "Our Sultan," i.e. Feyṣul, and the "armies of the Muslims," that is, of the Wahhabees, for they never apply the title of Muslims to any others save themselves; Turks, Egyptians, &c., being here invariably "Kuffār," "infidels," or "Mushrekeen," "polytheists." Nor do they pronounce in Nejed the odious series of imprecations against unbelievers, often recited at Cairo and Damascus; "ḍallil el-kuffār," "humble" or "abase the infidels," is the only but sufficiently comprehensive petition addressed to heaven on their account. Of other sermons, and what is there taught, I will speak afterwards when the opportunity arrives for a fuller explanation of Wahhabee doctrine; this digression is ceremonial only, not dogmatical.

Nor dare I in these pages expose to the laughter of European

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readers certain peculiarities of Nejdean ablution when it is performed, nor are Latin foot-notes now in fashion. But these oddities afford inexhaustible amusement to Arabs of other lands or persuasions; and should any one discreetly ask them of me in Arabic, I will avail myself of the synonyms of that comprehensive language to recount a story or two which will make my questioner laugh no less than it did the good folks of Baḥreyn and 'Omān, who related or listened to the like in my presence.

Another discrepancy in worship is negative only, but remarkable. It is customary among Mahometans to repeat ten times over after morning and sunset prayers a long sentence, principally extracted from the Coran, and containing Divine praises. Now everywhere but in Nejed each individual on these occasions holds in his hands the common Eastern rosary, and counts on its beads the number of recitations, thus to prevent mistake. But the Wahhabees have acutely remarked that the Prophet does not appear to have used any such implement, and accordingly reject it, while they employ their unaided fingers for the purpose of devotional computation, folding and unfolding them successively stave after stave. Indeed, not only on this but on all other occasions is the rosary wholly banished from Nejed, and a stranger who bears it is pretty sure to hear unfavourable comments on modern and superstitious inventions.

Let us now resume and conclude our survey of the town. The great mosque we have already seen; there are thirty or more small ones, or Mesjids, in the different quarters, some of them of spacious dimensions, especially that wherein the Ḳaḍee 'Abd-el-Laṭeef ordinarily acts as Imām, and that which is honoured by the daily presence of 'Abd-Allah, the heir-apparent. This latter edifice is in the first quarter of the city, the other in the third; both attract attention by their size and neatness, but are, like the rest, perfectly unadorned. In each and all the names of those whom vicinity obliges to attendance are read over morning and evening; a muster-call, the better to ensure presence and detect defaulters. The "voluntary system" has few partisans in Riaḍ.

Round the whole town run the walls, varying from twenty

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to thirty feet in height; they are strong, in good repair, and defended by a deep trench and embankment. Beyond them are the gardens, much similar to those of Ḳaseem, both in arrangement and produce, despite the difference of latitude, here compensated by a higher ground level. But immediately to the south, in Yemāmah, the eye remarks a change in the vegetation to a more tropical aspect; of this, however, I will not say more for the present.

A striking feature in this southerly slope of the central plateau, is the much greater abundance of water here than on its northern terrace in Sedeyr. This comparative moisture of the soil and of the atmosphere, the latter being, in fact, a consequence of the former, is first perceptible about Ḥoreymelah, whence it increases progressively southward, till it attains its maximum in the Yemāmah; further on towards Ḥareeḳ and Dowāsir it again diminishes, partly, I suppose, from the growing distance from the mountainous district, partly from the vicinity of the Great Desert and its arid heat.

I have already mentioned the frequency of butchers' shops in the market. The Nejdean breed of sheep is well known and much esteemed, even beyond the limits of Arabia. This is natural, for good and copious pasture, with a fairly temperate climate, render Nejed a land eminently adapted to the propagation and perfection of the ovine species. However in the judgment of many, amongst whom I myself am one, they are inferior as an article of food to the sheep of Diar-Bekr and the frontiers of Curdistan. In the market of Damascus, whither they sometimes find their way, they fetch a high, but not the highest price. Their wool is remarkably fine, almost equalling that of Cachemire in softness and delicacy. I need hardly say that they are broad-tailed; all Arab sheep are so more or less. Were Arabia in the enjoyment of circumstances more favourable to commerce and what else accompanies it, half the Turkish empire might hence alone be supplied with wool and mutton; the proportion of pasture land in this country almost equalling the arable and the unreclaimable desert taken together. But the difficulty of exportation from the centre across the frontiers is naturally great, and has been rendered yet more so artificially, I mean by misgovernment or by careless indolence.

Camels abound; it is a "wilderness of camels." The breed here

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resembles in the main that of Shomer; but the colour, there most often between red and yellow, is in Nejed generally white or grey; black is rare everywhere. The stature, too, of the Nejdean camel is somewhat slimmer and smaller than the northern, and the hair is finer. They are cheaper in proportion than sheep; twenty-five to thirty shillings is an average camel-price; not much for so powerful an animal. Dromedaries begin to grow frequent; but of them more anon.

Oxen and kine are much more common in Nejed than in the northerly provinces; in Yemāmah they abound, and are not rare, as I was told, in Wadi Dowāsir. These beasts are generally small-limbed, but always furnished with the hump of their Indian compeers, though less fortunate than they in attracting respect or adoration. The prevailing colour is dun. Buffaloes are unknown in Central Arabia.

Game, both small and great, feathered or quadruped, is plenty throughout all this district, but is seldom hunted. Partridges, quails, Ḳaṭa (a variety of the partridge kind), and pigeons, are to be met with everywhere; and I heard of, but did not see, the Ḳalam, a kind of bustard, and identical, I suppose, with the Ḥobāra of dictionaries, though not of spoken Arabic: I have myself seen and shot this bird in the neighbourhood of Rajcote. But small shot have never been introduced into Nejed; and to bring down a bird on the wing surpasses the skill of most Arab marksmen; besides, matchlocks and bullets are ill adapted to quail or partridge shooting. There are no ostriches in the uplands of Ṭoweyḳ. Of gazelles, numerous here even more than elsewhere, I have spoken already, nor did I see or hear of any other variety of the deer species. Nor are gazelles much hunted, unless by some chance Ṣolibah. Wild boars and pigs are frequent in the mountain; needs hardly say that these animals are here of no greater use than ornament. Only their tusks are sometimes converted, but beyond the limits of Wahhabee lands, into queer snuff-boxes, and sometimes into pipes, a twofold abomination. But even a Ṣolibah would not touch the flesh of the unclean animal, little more in favour with Eastern Christians than with Mahometans themselves, except where Europeans have by their example accustomed a small number of individuals to consider it as a lawful luxury.

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My readers must certainly be desirous to learn something about the horse in Central Arabia; the more so that Nejdean horses are to Arab horses in general what Arab horses are to those of other countries. And besides, what Englishman would esteem worthy his perusal a work on Arabia which should not contain at least ten pages on this subject? I am equally desirous of mounting with all speed what I confess to be my own hobby-horse; but I must awhile moderate my reader's impatience and my own, and we will wait together till dawns the happy day when we may visit the royal Riaḍ stables, and at leisure survey the "crême de la crême" of the race; and then all who care shall have free admittance in my company.

And now from this incidental mention of horses, the noblest of the bestial tribes, let us make an onward step to man, and add a few words regarding the general character and the principal elements of the population of Riaḍ itself and of the surrounding districts. For fine buildings and gardens, wild animals or domestic, valleys and mountains, do not make a country; "el beled bi' ahlihi," "a land is to be estimated after its indwellers," says a trite Arab proverb; and the chief game to an enquiring mind, though in another sense than that of Nimrod, is man. Or, to borrow the not inelegant lines of an Eastern poet—lines which may recall to some readers one of Heinrich Heine's most perfect epigrams:—

> I pass along by the dear dwelling, the dwelling of Leyla,
> And I bestow a kiss first on this wall and then on that;
> Yet think not that the dwelling-place itself is the object of my love:
> The object of my love is She who inhabits the dwelling.

We will observe a due gradation in this important matter, and accordingly begin from the lowest in the human scale—its negro type.

Throughout Arabia we had frequently met with negroes—in Djowf, Shomer, Ḳaseem and Sedeyr. But we had only met with them in the condition of slaves, and rarely in other than in the wealthier households, where these Africans were living, contented indeed and happy, fat and shining, but invariably under servitude, and in consequence entitled to no share in the political, or even in the civil, scheme of Arab society.

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Similar is their condition throughout Nejed itself so far as 'Aared. But here a change takes place; not only are negro slaves much more numerous than in the north, but even a distinct and free population of African origin comes into existence, along with its unfailing accompaniment of mulatto half-castes, till at last they form together a quarter, sometimes a third, of the sum total of inhabitants. Riad abounds with them, Manfooḥah and Selemee'yah yet more, while they swarm in the Ḥareeḳ, Wadi Dowāsir, and their vicinity. This is the result of several causes: firstly, the nearness of the great slave-marts, whether on the eastern or on the western coast, like Djiddah in Ḥejāz, and the numerous sea-ports of 'Omān on the other side; nor is this a nearness of space only, but of connecting routes, intercourse, and commerce. Hence the first draught of slaves to Central Arabia, whether from the starting-point of Mecca or from that of Hofhoof, passes directly through 'Aared, and many of them find a master here without going any farther. Alongside of this cause, and dependent on it, is the comparative cheapness of price: a negro here fetches from seven to ten pounds English in value; at Ḥā'yel or the Djowf it would be thirteen or fourteen. The climate also of Southern Nejed, which exhibits a certain similarity to the African, renders this part of Arabia more suited to negro habits and constitutions than are the high lands of Ṭoweyḳ or Shomer, and thus contributes to their multiplication. Lastly, there exists in the indigenous population itself a certain bent of character inclining to sympathy with the dusky races; this originates in a fact of extensive historical and ethnological bearing, and meriting further elucidation. My readers will permit me a few words on the subject.

At this point of Arabia, its geographical centre, commences, properly speaking, the intermixture of the Ḳaḥṭanic with the Ismaelitic family; and before we go much deeper to the south and east, we shall find the former predominate over and ultimately exclude the latter. Now the Ḳaḥṭanic race furnishes the link between the Arab and the Abyssinian, joining hands with the white or fair families of mankind on the right, and with the dusky or black on the left. These gradations, namely, of the Northern or Ismaelitic Arab, of the Southern or

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Ḳaḥṭanic, and of the Abyssinians, are, in spite of individual or local exceptions, often the result of anomalous circumstances, distinctly marked out by corresponding shades of manners, intellect, and associations, no less than by the physical features of skin and muscle. In this series the Ḳaḥṭanic Arabs are, so to speak, nearer related to the negro than are the Ismaelitic tribes, and hence more readily admit Africans to fellowship, intermarriage, and civil rights, nay, even to government—a fact which has not escaped the discerning eye of Niebuhr.

The terms Ḳaḥṭanic and Ismaelitic have, in my mind, rather a symbolical than a definite value—much like when we class languages into Semitic, and so forth, after the triple nomenclature of the family of Noah. How much historical weight may be allowed to these very terms is a matter of controversy; in this particular case, I should, with all due deference for the learning and research of those who may hold a different opinion, be inclined to admit the reality of the primal facts, while at the same time I cannot give equal credit to all the deductions and details drawn out by many Eastern and by some European authors. Constant tradition, and a chronology plausible in the main, with all its occasional and manifest defects, have certainly great value, and deserve respect even where they cannot command absolute belief; yet while we concede the general truth of the origin or pedigree assigned by national tradition, we must expect to find also many modifications, exceptions, and even distortions, in the account of events seen through the haze of so many ages, and transmitted to our view by instruments of notoriously defective character. Thus, while we accept, nor can we in reason do otherwise, the correctness of the Mosaic genealogy, so far as it goes, and of the incidents and pedigrees therein recorded, we cannot but hesitate in the application of these same data, whether made by ancient chronologers or by modern critics, and acknowledge that the base-work is, perhaps designedly, much too narrow for the extensive superstructure of certain Biblicists, while it is also by far too solid for the demolitionary process of hypercritical writers. These may see too little in it, and those too much. Meanwhile there is no harm in the use of symbols, however defective, when nothing better is at hand to represent a meaning; a little precaution is all

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that is required to give them their due value, and they may be safely entrusted to any one but an enthusiast or a sceptic. And it is under these restrictions that I employ the terms Ḳaḥṭanic and Ismaelitic.

Ḳaḥṭān, or in Hebrew orthography Jektan, is acknowledged by all Arabs for the first author and founder of their race and nationality, while his residence is no less unanimously fixed in Yemen. Some corroboration of this idea may be found in the names of his numerous progeny recorded in the sacred volume, names yet existing in the south-west of Arabia under the typical metamorphosis of localities; and some, too, may be derived from the annals of neighbouring nations, especially of the Abyssinians. My readers, will, I hope, be satisfied by a mere notice of a subject whose complete investigation does not belong to the province of this work, which is rather descriptive than historical. The same remarks and the same degree of proof may be applied to what we learn from Arab or Hebrew records concerning Ismael and his establishment in northern Arabia. But here immediately follows a curious discrepancy between the Jewish and the Arab narrative. In Genesis we find Ismael married to an Egyptian woman, and from their union derives his succeeding race. On the other hand, Arab chronicles with one consent marry him into the family of Djorhem, a descendant of Ḳaḥṭān. This Gordian knot might perhaps be easiest cut by supposing Ismael to have been a bigamist, no uncommon thing in those days. But the truth lies deeper.

The learned Fresnel, if I remember right, has indicated the clue to the serious solution of this problem. The writers who describe the alliance of Ismael with the Djorhemites are all Mahometans, and consequently in duty bound to give whatever possible lustre to the pedigree of their Prophet. Now Mahomet was undoubtedly of Ismaelitic origin; the tribe of Kenānah, from which he sprung, was near akin to that of Ḳēys, and both were descended from Nezār, whose very name was the war-cry of the Northern Arabs in their combats with the armies of Yemen. But, on the other hand, superior antiquity and untainted purity of pedigree had given the descendants of Ḳaḥṭān an advantage of nobility acknowledged throughout

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the Peninsula, so much, that to them alone was the title of "Arabs" applied in its strict and ancestral sense. Mahomet was accordingly less noble in birth than those whom he subdued; the Prophet a plebeian when compared to his aristocratic disciples. To obviate this inconvenience, a serious one in Eastern eyes, a marriage of Ismael into the Ḳaḥṭanic family was invented, and whatever honour the fathership of the son of Abraham could not confer, was supplied by the Djorhemite mother. The same fortunate match ennobled in common all the tribes of the north, and put them on a level with the proud chieftains of Yemen, while an additional reason for political and religious union was deduced from an affinity cemented at so early a date.

However, the entire testimony of history and tradition previous to the Hejirah rejects this convenient but imaginary alliance, and the course of events in later times bears much witness to the diversity, none to the community, of the two great races. We shall now see what light personal observation of actual peculiarities and present life, language, and institutions in Arabia may throw on the question. Existing facts are also sources of real knowledge, and the more dependable because the less subject to misconstruction and falsification. Hitherto we have been travelling among the northern races, we are now on the confines of the southern; thus far our hosts have laid claim to be the children of Nezār and Ismael; a little farther on they will entitle themselves descendants of Ya'areb, and Ḳaḥṭān. We have seen what are the first in peace and in war, in family, business, and government; we shall soon see what are the latter. How far these various points confirm their own assertion of hereditary disjunction, I shall sometimes notice myself, and sometimes leave to my readers to infer. The personal identification of Ismael or of Ḳaḥṭān is another question; it depends on history and criticism, and does not affect the fact of a manifest and existing diversity in blood, whether we place the origin of that diversity in the two above-named personages or elsewhere. This preface may suffice to render intelligible much hardly to be else understood or appreciated in the remainder of our work; let us now revert a moment to our African friends.

The number of negro slaves in these provinces gives rise to

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a second stage of existence for the black, common in the East, though not equally compatible with his condition in the far West. I mean that not of emancipation only, but of social equality also, with those around him—not by Act of Parliament or of Congress, but by individual will and public feeling. Nothing is more common for a Mahometan, but above all for an Arab, whether Mahometan or not, than to emancipate his slaves, sometimes during his own lifetime, on occasion of some good success of a religious obligation, of a special service rendered, nay often out of sheer good will, and sometimes on his death-bed, when he often strives to ensure a favourable reception in the next world by an act of generous humanity (at his heir's expense) done at the moment of quitting this. Another cause in operation is one readily imagined in a land where morals are lax, and legal restraint on this point yet laxer—I mean the universality of concubinage between the master and his female slave. If the vicarious husband be a Mahometan, the boys sprung from this union are free-born, and so, I believe, the girls, at least in the eye of the law. Among non-Mahometan Arabs the children, male or female, are regarded as slaves, unless formally emancipated; the reason being that such connections are here stamped with an illegal character; whereas Mahomet has been more indulgent to his followers in this respect. However, I was told that among the non-Mahometan Arabs also, the Biaḍeeyah of 'Omān, for example, it is rare that a father does not subsequently confer freedom on his children, however born, and this is a copious source of black or dusky citizens in Arabia.

These new possessors of civil liberty soon marry and are given in marriage. Now, although an emancipated negro or mulatto is not at once admitted to the higher circles of aristocratic life, nor would an Arab chief of rank readily make over his daughter to a black, yet they are by no means under the ban of incapacity and exclusion which weighs on them in Massachusetts and Oregon, even after the legalizing measures of Congress, and the victorious eloquence of their American or English patrons. Accordingly, negroes can without any difficulty give their sons and daughters to the middle or lower class of Arab families, and thus arises a new generation of mixed race, here denomi-

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nated "Khoḍeyreeyah" or "Benoo-Khoḍeyr," the which being interpreted means, "the Greens," or "the sons of the Green one." My readers must not, however, suppose that mulatto flesh in Arabia is so literally grass as to bear its very hue. The colours green, black, and brown, are habitually confounded in common Arabic parlance, though the difference between them is, of course, well known and maintained in lexicons, or whereever accuracy of speech is aimed at. These "green ones," again, marry, multiply, and assume various tints, grass-green, emerald, opal, and the like; or, in exacter phrase, brown, copper-coloured, olive, and what Americans, I believe, call yellow. Like their progenitors, they do not readily take their place among the nobles or upper ten thousand, however they may end by doing even this in process of time; and I have myself while in Arabia been honoured by the intimacy of more than one handsome "Green-man," with a silver-hilted sword at his side, and a rich dress on his dusky skin, but denominated Sheykh or Emeer, and humbly sued by Arabs of the purest Ismaelitic or Ḳaḥṭanic pedigree. Riaḍ is full of these Khoḍeyreeyah shopkeepers, merchants, and officers of government; and I must add that their desire, common to all parvenus, of aping the high ton and ruling fashion, makes them at times the most bigoted and disagreeable Wahhabees in the city; a tendency which is the more fostered by hereditary narrowness of intellect. Some of them take an opposite direction, and imitate their African grandfathers and grandmothers in indifference, not unfrequently in covert aversion to Mahometanism and Wahhabeeism altogether. "What stuff and nonsense they do talk about predestination and divine decrees," said to me one day, but in private, a dashing young Ḳhoḍeyree, who in the mosque figured among the devoutest of the Muslims. "If I choose to do the thing, I do it; and if I choose not to do it, I don't do it; and there is an end of the matter." Reasoning, if not conclusive, yet not wholly easy to refute.

Thus in central Nejed society presents a new element pervading it from its highest to its lowest grades. Another peculiarity, not physical indeed, but moral, offers itself in the character of the indigenous population, taken apart from the embellishment or distortion caused by religious tenets. Not

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only as a Wahhabee, but equally as a Nejdean, does the native of 'Aareḍ, Aflāj, Yemāmah, Ḥareeḳ, and Dowāsir, differ, and that widely, from his fellow-Arab of Shomer and Ḳaseem, nay, of Woshem and Sedeyr. The cause of this difference is much more ancient than the epoch of the great Wahhabee, and must be sought first and foremost in the pedigree itself.

The northern and central population, exclusive of the five provinces just enumerated, claims—nor is there any positive reason for disputing their claim—to be descended from the great tribes of Ṭā'i, Wa'il, Mazin, Ḥarb, Kenānaḥ, Sedoos, Ṭaghleb, and others celebrated in Arab records; but all, except Ṭā'i, tracing back their origin to Ḳaḥṭān, Rabeea', and Moḍar, and forming the bulk of that great national confederation which, a hundred and twenty years before Mahomet, broke the yoke of Yemen, and brought freedom to Nejed. With these have been mingled from time to time families immigrant from Yemen, and owning Ḳaḥṭān for parent, Ḳoḍaa' for instance, Ṣalee'h, Kelb, and Modhej. The 'Anezah of the Syrian desert, with the Bishr, Ḥoweyṭat, and the Shomer of Euphrates, belong ultimately to the same stock. But from the northern frontier of 'Aareḍ to the Great Desert or Dahnā, in place of the pedigrees now mentioned, we meet with a new name, peculiar to these lands, but very familiar to Arab ears, and of frequent occurrence in prose and verse. It is Tameem, the most numerous and perhaps the most warlike among the families of Nezār; and from Tameem alone the indigenous Arabs of 'Aareḍ, Yemāmah, Aflāj, and Ḥareeḳ, with part of Dowāsir, are, or believe themselves, derived. Now Benoo-Tameem have been in all ages distinguished from other Arabs by strongly drawn lines of character, the object of the exaggerated praise and of the biting satire of native poets. Good or bad, these characteristics, described some thousand years ago, are identical with the portrait of their real or pretended descendants. "Do you wonder at the men of 'Aareḍ?" said a man of Ḥaṣa in reply to my unfavourable comments on Riaḍ and its people; "surely you cannot have forgotten that they are Benoo-Tameem?" Much less spirited, less profusely generous, less prone to movement and hazardous enterprise, less cheerful and open too than the majority of Arab clans, they were known as more perse-

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vering, more united, more prudent; sparing of words, not easily roused nor quick to manifest their feelings, but firm of purpose, terrible in revenge, deep and implacable haters, doubtful friends to all save their own immediate kindred—may I say it without offence, and under obvious qualifications, the Scots of the Peninsula? Their very expression of feature, reserved, often contracted, gloomy, or at best serious, contrasts strangely with the frank and pleasing faces of the northerly tribes, while it implies greater capacity for rule, organization, and, no less, oppression. Acting far more than any other Arabs on system, and less on impulse, of a narrower but a more concentrated frame of intellect and will, their union and perseverance are morally sure to triumph in the long run over their disunited and desultory neighbours, and the Nejdean empire necessarily tends to absorb or crush the greater part of the Peninsula, perhaps at no distant period.

This same type stamps all their words and ways, even in house-life and in market dealings. He who converses with them would do well to measure his expressions, and his very gestures, as they theirs, or he will be in danger of giving, so to speak, much, and getting little. Nor let him open his heart and mind to men who will think twenty, nay, twice hundred times, before opening theirs to him, nor make too much display before the envious, nor confide in a race where treachery is quite as common as good faith. Not indeed that he will often meet with a downright verbal lie, but he may often be caught by a practical one; to say nothing and yet lie, is an art well known and practised throughout 'Aaredh.

Along with this unamiable cast of mind and temper goes a greater simplicity in dress and in house ornament, the cutting of ringlets and the absence of ostentation in the use of wealth and goods. All this is simply natural to the men of 'Aaredh and Yemāmah, independent of Wahhabee puritanism, and the rigour of its code. But even this double rigour, innate and legal, cannot always prevent their immense pride from finding vent in gorgeous trappings and costly furniture, when the consciousness of absolute and domineering strength affords security in so doing. Fortunately for them, the number of those who can safely enjoy such exceptional privileges is small;

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and the common routine is one of moderation, approaching to austerity.

The Nejdean of these provinces is essentially agriculturist or shepherd. Woshem, indeed, because situated on the high road of Ḥejāz, and the north of Sedeyr from its comparative proximity to the boundaries of Koweyt and Baṣrah, have something more of a commercial character, which in Arabs implies a love of travel and no reluctance to a temporary change of his native land for foreign scenes. Before that the Wahhabee government had, by creating a new and important centre in Nejed itself, tended to draw inwards around it the energy formerly directed outwards to the circumference, the class of travelling merchants, now confined to Shaḳra' or Zulphah, seems to have been equally numerous in Lower Sedeyr and in 'Aareḍ itself. Of this the personal history of Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahhāb has afforded us an example; others may be found in old Arab writers, like Ḥareeree and Ebn-Khallican, in the Kitab-el-Aghanee, and Rowḍat-el-Abrar; and even in later compilations, for example, in the biographies of Maḳarree, and the curious but equivocal Mustaḍref. But at the present day, the men of Sedeyr from Toweym southwards, of 'Aareḍ, Yemāmah, Aflāj, and Dowāsir, are very rarely seen on trading business beyond the narrow circle of their own provinces. The commerce furnished by Riaḍ and the other great Nejdean centres of population is in its active part abandoned to foreigners, to merchants from Ḥaṣa, from Ḳaṭeef and 'Omān, from Mecca, Wadi Nejrān and Yemen. The born Nejdean does indeed keep his storehouse, but will not go in quest of what to store it withal. An exception must be made in favour of the natives of Ḥareeḳ; but of them I shall speak farther on.

On the contrary, agriculture and gardening are much in vogue. Everyone owns his little plot of ground, whence he derives his own chief maintenance and that of his family; the monarch himself is not exempt from this law, for a considerable portion of the royal revenue is invested in plantations and fields. Nor are Nejdeans contemptible cultivators; the copious produce of their palm-trees, and of their corn or maize grounds, attests not perhaps theoretical but certainly practical skill. True, the plough is of very simple construction,

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but a light soil and a mild climate do not exact the hard stress and deep furrows which demand the more complicated instrument of the north. A rough hurdle answers all the purposes of an iron-toothed harrow, and a large shovel, often wooden, does the work of a spade. Irrigation is everywhere indispensable, no produce worthy of a husbandman can here thrive without it; and I have already said that a little more mechanical art might be advantageously bestowed on their pulleys and buckets. However, considering the number and the wants of the population—both comparatively less than they would be in most parts of Europe over an equal space and under parallel circumstances—what they have suffices them; and the Nejdean, if not active, is far from lazy.

However, respect for prophetic tradition and strict orthodoxy have somewhat impaired tillage, and many prefer theological resignation to the labour of human arms. In this they have at least the merit of self-consistency, though practised blindly to their own detriment. Others, in whom the Coran and primitive example have not wholly extinguished common sense, regret the decline of so creditable a means of livelihood, and add hereby one item more to their many complaints against the work of the Wahhabee and its results.

Meanwhile another and a very different source of action and occupation has been opened, or at least enlarged and facilitated, by the present state of affairs. Nejdeans were ever prone to quarrel and war; their character, pourtrayed a few lines back, implies no less; and the motto "thou shalt want ere I want" is not so peculiar to the highlands of Scotia that it might not have been with fully equal propriety blazoned on many an escutcheon in the highlands of Nejed. But so long as their feuds and forays, wars and plunder, were bounded by the ranges of Ṭoweyḳ, there was little to gain or lose; the poor pillaged the poor, and the beggar, to permit ourselves a vulgar allusion, sued the beggar. But now, under the powerful dynasty of the Ebn-Sa'oods, the case has changed. War became henceforth methodical, and in consequence successful; better still, it is directed, not against their needy fellow-Nejdeans, but against the wealthy coast of Ḥaṣa, the traders and the pearl-fishers of 'Omān, or to bring the spoils of Mecca

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and Medinah, of Meshid-Hoseyn and Zobeyr, into the dwellings and the treasury of Ḍerey'eeyah and its dependencies. War is a lottery, and a lottery has more attractions than the plough and the spade; but war attended by such circumstances, and presenting all the excitement of fanaticism, novelty, and rapacity, could not fail to engross the public mind, while it supplied the public wants. From the first campaigns of Sa'ood-ebn-Sa'ood down to our own time, every man of 'Aared and her sister provinces looks on the sword as a foremost means of private and household subsistence no less than of public revenue and state acquirement; and hence the whole current of Wahhabee being sets in a direction the very reverse of commerce, and not over favourable to agriculture. The "armies of the Muslims,"—of themselves, their victories, their hopes, their anticipated triumph over the "infidels" their neighbours, are the staple of their thoughts, the key-note of their conversation, to the exclusion of other more peaceable, but more humanizing and more useful topics. In this respect, as in many others, has Wahhabeeism tended to deteriorate the Nejdean character.

The language here spoken, like that of Ḳaseem, is still in the main the pure and unchanged dialect of the Coran, no less living and familiar to all now than in the seventh century. However, in 'Aared it begins to suffer a slight alteration, due in a measure to the influence of Riaḍ vulgarity, the Cockneyism, I might say, of the capital. This depravation consists partly in an affected use of the diminutive, causing much laughter to a new arriver, and considerably vitiating the correctness of the terms employed. Were this a work of philology I would willingly give some amusing examples picked up in Riaḍ; but this kind of witticism loses its force by translation. Another defect here common, is the narrowing of what Arab grammarians significantly call the "satiated vowels," and which represent the broadest and fullest sounds of *ā*, *ē*, and *ū*. These satiated vowels undergo in Riaḍ and Southern Nejed a fasting regimen, and are starved down into ordinary *a*, *e*, and *u*. Nor are the common people so exact as the natives of Ḳaseem and Sedeyr in expressing the vocal inflexion denoting diversity of case; sometimes they substitute one such termination for

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another, and sometimes omit them altogether. However, it is a curious fact, that when substitution takes place, it is not arbitrary, but follows a law well known to students, for whose sake I will add a few words more on this topic.

Every Oriental scholar knows that in nouns of genuine Arab formation and declension, the three cases designated, though only approximately, by nominative, genitive, and accusative, the second of which comprises also our ablative and dative, while the vocative is divided between the first and the third, that these three cases, I say, are distinguished from each other by the terminal sounds entitled respectively Fatḥah, Kesrah, and Ḍammah, subjoined to the last consonant of the word, and that in this variation consists what grammarians call the "ta'areeb," or "arabization" of the word. Secondly, every one knows that in words considered to be exotic, and not of pure and primal Arab descent, the second inflexion or "Kesrah" is omitted, and its place is supplied by the "Fatḥah," which has thus to do double duty, while the three ordinary cases are reduced to two. In this lies the main point of discrimination between terms strictly Arabic, and what are not so. A rule, however, applicable to substantives only, or whatever corresponds by its use to a substantive, since verbs and particles, the remaining elements of Arab speech, enjoy freedom from the Kesrah Schibboleth, except in rare and peculiar circumstances, easily perceived and accounted for.

Now it is equally well known that the Coran, to adopt for a moment Muslim phraseology, is the one and infallible, because heaven-sent; nay, the Divine authority in grammar not a whit less than in every thing else. So also the Ḳoreyshee or the Ismaelitic dialect, being the only one in which the Deity speaks, and which is still, as we have already seen, the abiding heritage of Central Arabia, is in consequence the standard of genuine Arabic for all Mahometan philologists, and the test alike of vernacularism and of correctness. Meanwhile, we find these same writers admitting also the existence of a collateral but different dialect, not wholly disavowed by grammar, yet set apart as foreign, or, rather, non-Coranic. We are thus assured of three facts respecting this second dialect; namely, that it is of ancient origin, at least coæval with the Ḳoreyshee

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employed by the Prophet; next, that it is essentially Arabic; and lastly, that it belongs to a race distinct from that indigenous in the Ḥejāz or in Central Arabia.

It is remarkable that here, in the vicinity of Riaḍ, and just where the admixture of the Ḳaḥṭanic stock begins to be perceptible, we find the precise variety acknowledged by grammarians also beginning simultaneously to modify the prevailing language; and when we go farther southward and eastward, it steadily increases, till in 'Omān it entirely supplants the Coranic or Ismaelite forms of speech. In this diversity, attended by such circumstances, and itself of so local a character, it is difficult not to recognize an additional indication of that other diversity of race already alluded to as existing, alike in fact and in history, between the inhabitants of Northern and Southern Arabia, the more so that the town of Riaḍ stands topographically on the boundary line. Certain it is that the final Kesrah here first begins to make place for the Fatḥah, and further on disappears almost entirely. Other discrepancies between the Ismaelitic and the Ḳaḥṭanic dialects will be noticed when we reach 'Omān, the stronghold of the latter.

These observations may strike some of my readers as new, and perhaps wiredrawn or fanciful. They are, however, the result of experience; I have heard them confirmed by thinking natives themselves, men capable of remarking, and of reasoning on their own remarks. That Niebuhr and other travellers in Yemen should not have specified, at least distinctly, such peculiarities, nor drawn similar inferences, ought to occasion no surprise. The Yemen, open now to Ethiopian, now to Turkish, now to Egyptian invasion and occupation, itself a motley mart of commerce, where Jews and Africans, northerners and southerners (Asiatic I mean, not American) meet, traffic, and dwell, must long since have lost with purity of blood purity of language; while its frequent, nay intimate, religious and commercial dealings with Mecca and the adjoining Ḥejāz cannot have failed to render whatever phonic forms are usual in the latter district, prevalent in the former also. Not in Yemen, at least not in its Tehāmah or coast provinces, can we expect to find very marked traces of Ḳaḥṭanic dialect.

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We might now enter on a parallel but a yet more vexed subject of discussion, namely, the Nabathæans and the Ḥimyarites, of whom, and especially of the former, I here for the first time in Arabia heard the names or found the traces. But the former of these will soon claim an especial notice in the Ḥaṣa and the latter in 'Omān, and it will be then the moment to speak of what secondary intimations Central Arabia affords of their influence and existence.

But I had almost forgot that all this time we are walking about the capital or strolling in its gardens; the noonday sun is hot, and probably my companions are tired, and would like to return home, there to make a quiet meal off our dates and onions, and wash it down with three cups of coffee, such as, alas! my reader is little likely to enjoy from Paris to Stamboul. We will now accordingly rest awhile, and after a short repose resume our interrupted tale, and amid the incidents of medical and professional life pourtray to the best of our abilities what yet remains for delineation of Riaḍ and of its inhabitants.

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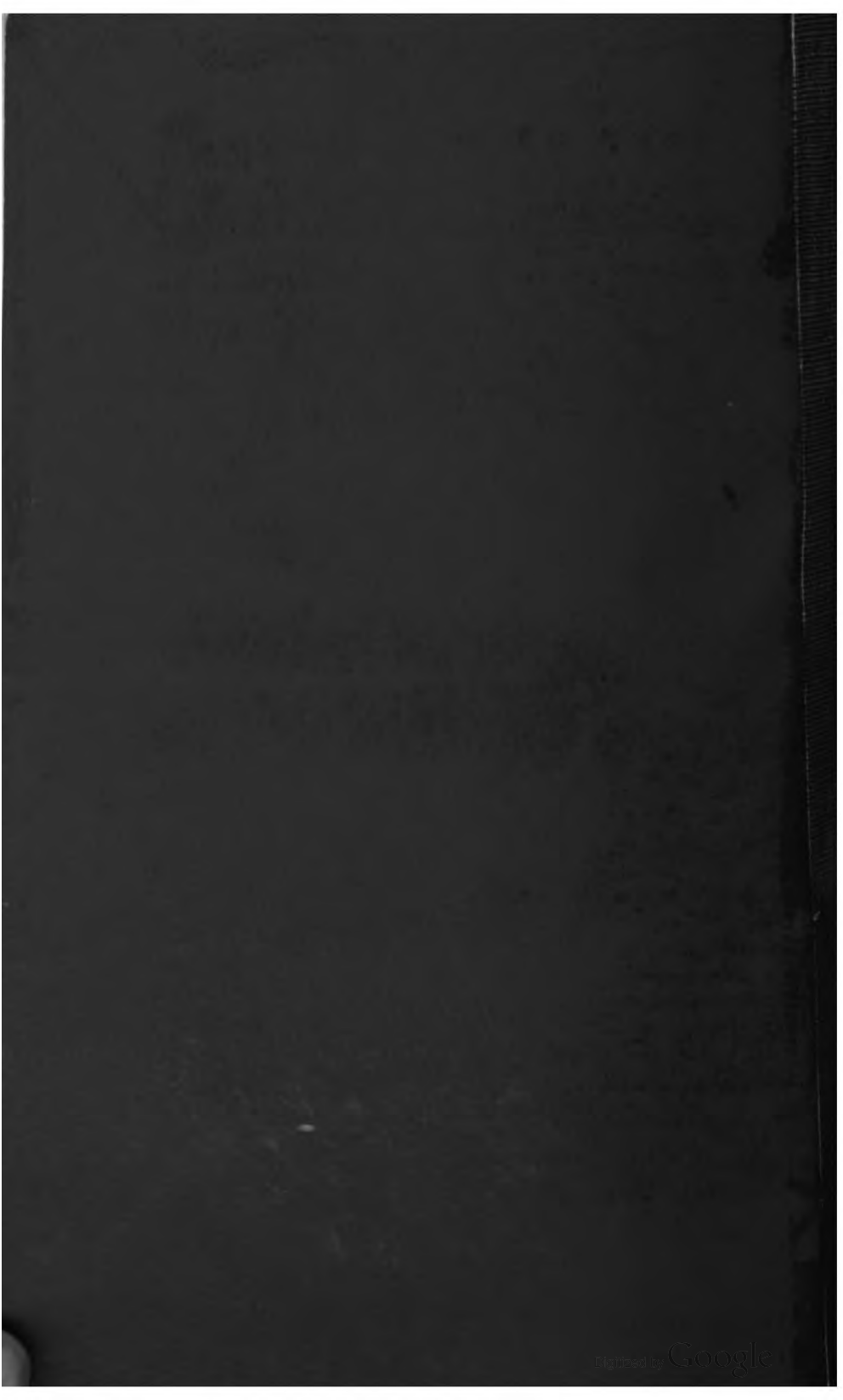
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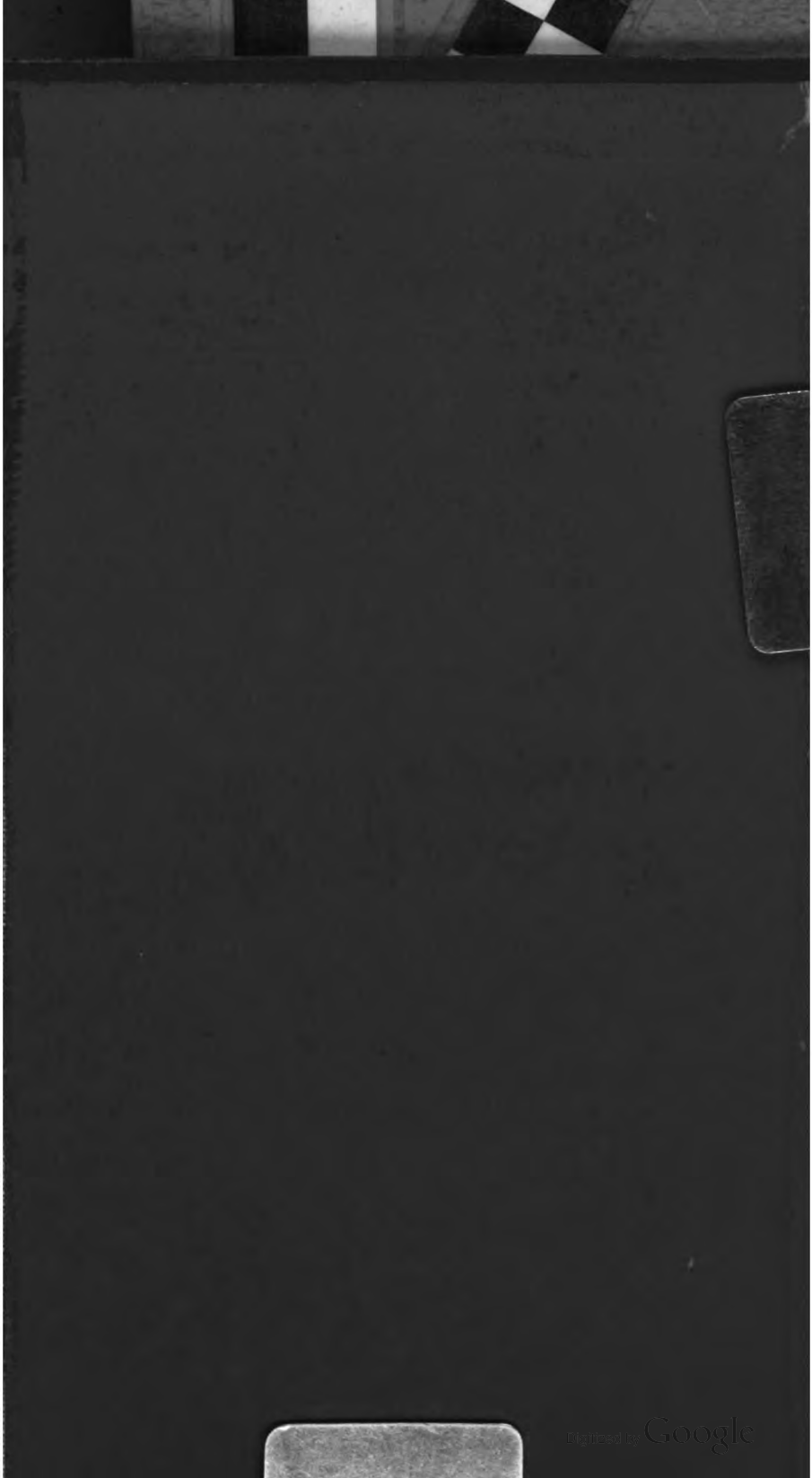
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